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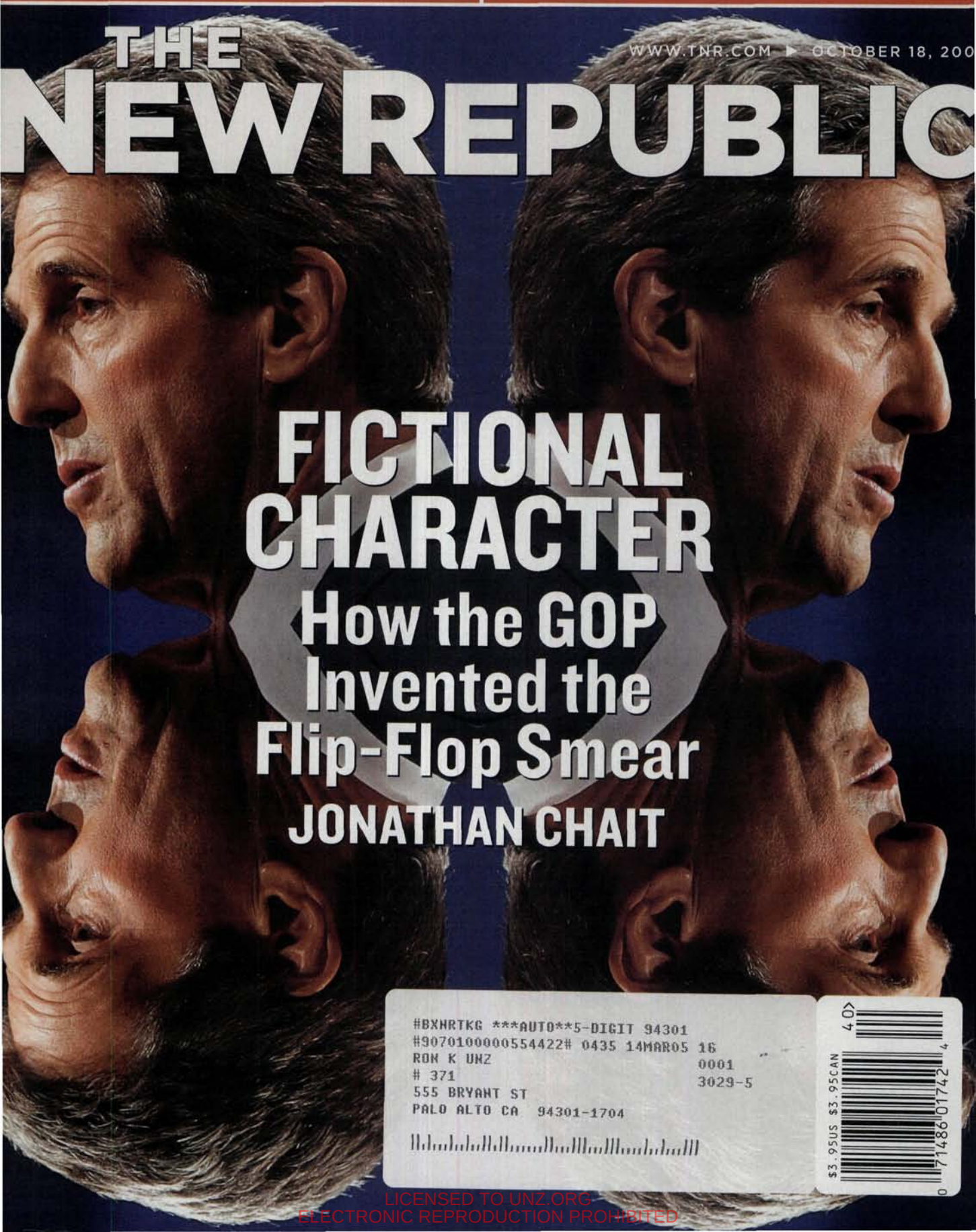

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How the GOP Invented the Flip-Flop Smear

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Cover Story

Jonathan Chait **20** **Fictional Character** Republicans say John Kerry is a waffler who lacks core convictions. And, strangely enough, they said the exact same thing about Al Gore and Bill Clinton. How the GOP invented the flip-flop smear—and why the press keeps falling for it.

Politics & the World

4 **CORRESPONDENCE** Was The New Republic too mean to Rudy Giuliani and John McCain? &c.

Peter Beinart **6** **TRB | Past Imperfect** Conservatives say John Kerry doesn't have any great ideas for Iraq. What they don't say is that it's George W. Bush's fault.

The Editors **9** **Flex Time**
What Kerry should say—and Bush should do—about Darfur.

10 **NOTEBOOK** L. Paul Bremer comes clean on Iraq, almost, &c.

Ryan Lizza **12** **Campaign Journal: Local Hero**
The Kerry campaign you never see in *The New York Times*.

Michael Crowley **13** **Crossing Over**
Is Colorado Senate hopeful Ken Salazar the next Barack Obama?

Lawrence F. Kaplan **15** **Mum's the Word** Why the Kerry campaign doesn't want you to know who's advising it.

Gregg Easterbrook **17** **Turn On** The best reason to vote for John Kerry? He might be the first president in decades with a real energy policy.

Jeremy Kahn **38** **CLEVELAND DIARIST | Swing State of Mind**

Books & the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann **24** **FILMS | Compassions** *The Motorcycle Diaries* is Che Guevara at his most romantic; *Moolaadé* is Sembène at his most resolute.

Albert Murray **25** **Jazz: Notes Toward a Definition**
Capturing the essence of an elusive art.

James Wood **28** **The Spoils** *Author, Author* by David Lodge

William Logan **31** **POEM** | *The Donkey*

Ruth Franklin **34** **All That Glimmers** *Heir to the Glimmering World* by Cynthia Ozick

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY *Shawn Thew/EPA/Landov*

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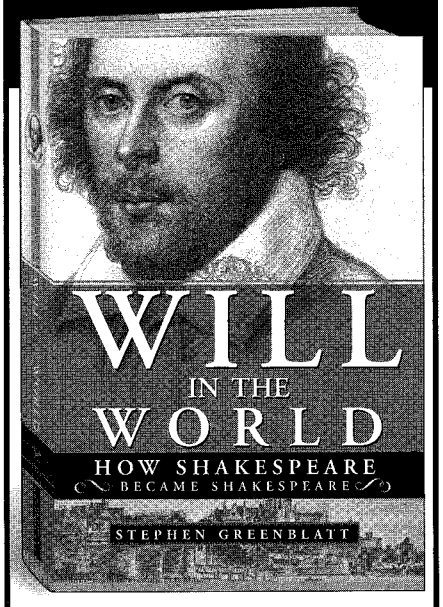
WILL IN THE WORLD
How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare



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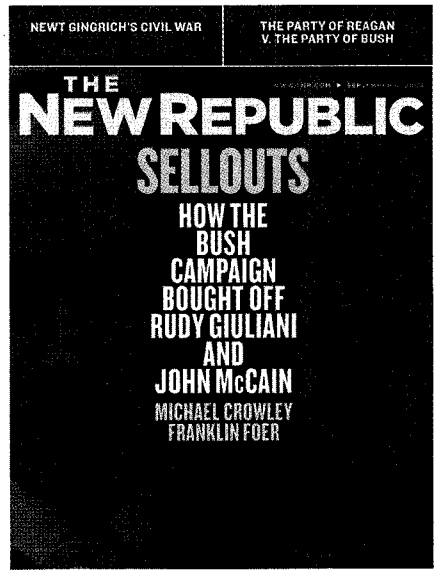
GREAT MAN THEORY

As a New Yorker, I take strong exception to Michael Crowley's suggestion that Rudy Giuliani miraculously became a hero to Republicans only after September 11, 2001 ("Profit Sharing," September 6). What a bunch of revisionist nonsense! To remind Crowley, Giuliani was the Republican mayor of New York City who brought crime down to historic low levels, who cut welfare dependency by over 50 percent, and whose strong leadership skills made a once-ungovernable New York City governable again—with a renewed quality of life that became the envy of other large cities. These achievements made Giuliani a hero to Republicans (and others, seeing as how he won reelection in 1997 by a landslide in a Democratic city) *before* September 11. Pre–September 11, Giuliani secured his place as one of New York's great mayors. After September 11, Giuliani became New York's greatest mayor. And any suggestion otherwise is simply not supported by the facts.

MICHAEL J. VALENTE
Brooklyn, New York

TRUE FAITH

Franklin Foer's piece on John McCain offends me greatly ("Opportunism Knocks," September 6). The article is mean-spirited. Foer's bottom line seems to be that, in view of McCain's past and present differences with George W. Bush, the only reason he could be supporting him now is to firm up his credentials with the Republican establishment with an eye to a 2008 presidential candidacy. I have no idea what, if any, McCain's presidential ambitions might be, and, I suspect, neither does Foer. Why not give the man credit for telling us what he believes: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SELLOUTS
HOW THE BUSH CAMPAIGN BOUGHT OFF RUDY GIULIANI AND JOHN McCAIN
MICHAEL CROWLEY
FRANKLIN FOER

that the war with Islamic fascism dwarfs all other issues and that, from his perspective, a Bush administration is preferable to a Kerry administration? I believe that, and so do many other readers of The New Republic, I suspect.

DAVID SAVITZ
Brookline, Massachusetts

BABY STEPS

Sheridan Prasso's report on the state of garment workers and their unions in Cambodia exaggerates that nation's achievements in labor relations ("Trading Up," August 16 & 23). Having worked with Cambodian leaders, labor organizations, and the International Labor Organization for several years, I share Prasso's praise for the limited progress that has been achieved. But she neglects to mention serious problems that require rapid responses from the newly constituted government. Prasso fails to mention

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the assassination of a leading garment-union leader in the last year, designed to send a clear warning to unionists. The prosecution of those charged with killing Chea Vichea, the national union head, is mired in Cambodia's highly politicized judicial system, and the accused now recant confessions they say were forced from them. And, while garment workers are earning good salaries by Cambodian standards, many factories still fail to pay their employees for overtime work, a chronic issue in the garment industry. Lastly, the Cambodian government, because of its disorganization over the past year, has failed to implement the overdue modernization of labor law and labor courts. With respect to the Raffles Hotel strike, which Prasso only briefly mentions, Cambodia's independent Arbitration Council decision in favor of the union was arrogantly ignored for months by the Singapore-based hotel chain, which fired hundreds of employees who had gone on strike over a wage dispute. Cambodia (and the labor organizations that it has permitted to operate there) deserves credit for moving much further in the area of labor rights than neighbors like Laos and Vietnam, but reports like Prasso's give a false impression of accomplishment that the facts do not justify at this time.

JOHN A. LAWRENCE
Democratic Staff Director
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

SHERIDAN PRASSO RESPONDS: Having witnessed the miseries of impoverished, pre–garment era Cambodia, when I reported on the country as a news agency correspondent in Phnom Penh from 1991 to 1994, I can state without doubt that the facts do support a significant accomplishment for the country. Unfortunately, due to space constraints, the reporting of Chea Vichea's assassination was cut before publication, but the article did point out that long-overdue reforms have been needlessly delayed by political deadlock. That the Raffles Hotel has violated Cambodian law is not the fault of the Cambodians, but of the hotel managers. This letter merely points out that the glass is half empty when, in fact, it is also half full. ■

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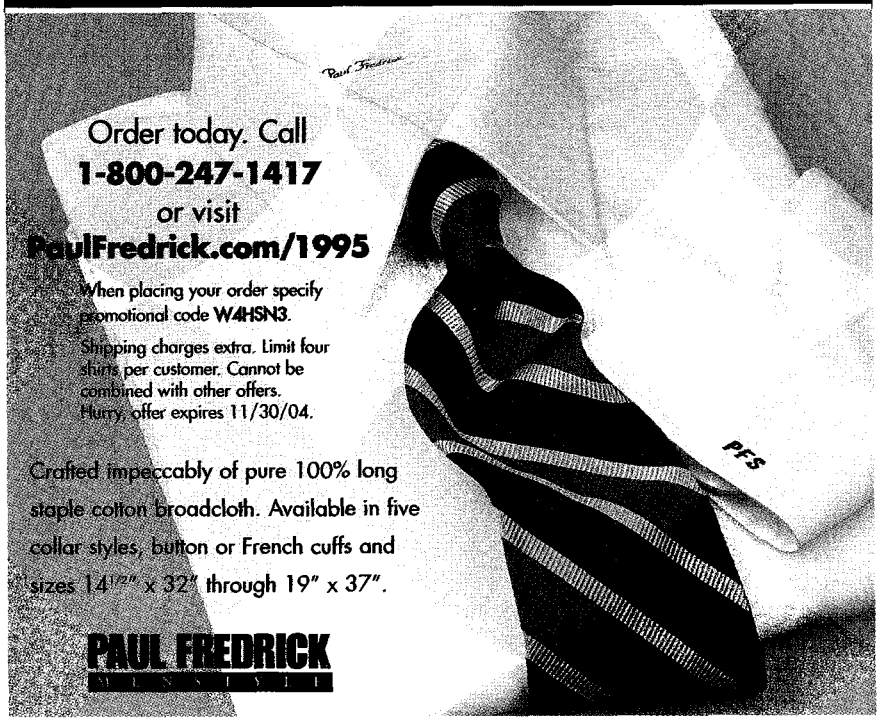
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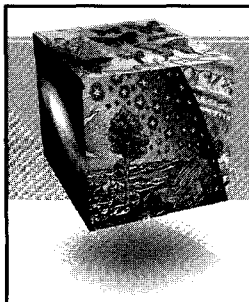

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Past Imperfect

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

WHEN IT COMES TO Iraq, President Bush's supporters generally prefer not to discuss President Bush; they prefer to discuss John Kerry. And for good reason. Arguing that Bush's policies are working is hard. Arguing that Kerry's wouldn't is much easier.

The great virtue of attacking Kerry's proposals is that it implies a parallelism between the two candidates. Sure, intelligent Bush supporters concede, the president's policies aren't producing a stable, democratic Iraq. But Kerry's wouldn't either—so it's a wash.

There's a grain of truth here: Kerry *doesn't* have any brilliant ideas for saving Iraq. But there's an even greater irony: *The reason he doesn't* is because the Bush administration has dug such a deep hole that, at this point, even Bismarck, Clausewitz, and Sun Tzu couldn't produce a four-point plan to turn Iraq into a beacon for the Middle East. For the Bush administration to slam Kerry for lacking a convincing plan for victory in Iraq is like dropping him in the middle of the desert and slamming him for lacking a convincing plan to find water. The right seems to have forgotten that the Iraq debate didn't begin when John Kerry outlined his four-point Iraq plan two weeks ago at New York University; it began 18 months ago, when the Bush administration began losing the peace.

Nothing illustrates this better than the issue of international troops. Conservatives gleefully ridicule Kerry's promises to bring foreign troops to assist in the occupation of Iraq. "[C]ompletely irresponsible," David Brooks wrote recently in *The New York Times*. A "Disneyesque fantasy." Brooks is right that few governments will send troops into the Iraqi cauldron now, regardless of who is president. But he largely misses the point. For the purposes of evaluating the two candidates, the relevant question isn't whether John Kerry could do a better job of bringing foreign troops into Iraq *now*; it's whether he could have done a better job over the last year and a half. And the answer to that question is almost certainly yes.

Let's review some history. In the spring of 2003, the United States was sitting pretty. Saddam Hussein had been overthrown, "major combat operations" appeared over, and governments that had opposed the war were scrambling to get back into America's good graces. In a surprise concession, France proposed in late April to suspend Iraqi sanctions and joined the United States in warning Syria not to harbor Saddam loyalists. Russia and India both appeared open to sending troops if the United Nations was given a central postwar role.

The White House responded by kicking antiwar governments while they were down. At a high-level meeting on April 21, 2003, administration officials discussed downgrading France's status at international meetings. When the G-8 leaders met in the French city of Evian in June, Bush pointedly stayed across the border in Switzerland. Because Mexico's Vicente Fox had opposed the war, the White House canceled Cinco de Mayo celebrations. And, in retaliation against Jean Chrétien, Bush scrapped a trip to Ottawa, leading one Canada expert to declare that U.S.-Canadian relations were at their "lowest moment since the early 1960s."

Amid these reprisals, in late May the United States pushed through a Security Council resolution that gave the United Nations a far smaller role in Iraq than most foreign governments wanted. By the summer, Russia and India—which the United States had been hoping would send 17,000 peacekeepers—were saying the resolution didn't give them enough political cover. Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov suggested that a new U.N. resolution was "the most likely way of securing the participation of a large number of countries." And, within the Bush administration, Colin Powell argued for just that. But he was opposed by Dick Cheney, who seemed determined to prove that a triumphant United States didn't need U.N. help. As one U.N. diplomat told *Newsweek*'s Fareed Zakaria in June, "The rest of the world is saying, 'We're willing to help,' but Washington is determined to run Iraq itself."

With a second U.N. resolution still stymied by Bush hard-liners, events in Iraq took a sharp turn for the worse. On August 19, a truck bomb rocked the U.N. compound in Baghdad, killing 22 people, including the U.N.'s chief envoy. A week later, the Bush administration finally offered many of the concessions Russia and India had been demanding—*including a U.N.-sponsored multinational* force under U.S. command. But, by then—with the rate of American casualties growing from 217 in August to 278 in September to 457 in October—foreign governments were developing cold feet. In late September, *India Today* wrote, "[T]ill a few weeks ago India would have been comfortable with even a US-led command under a UN umbrella in the fashion of Kosovo or even Afghanistan. The killings in Iraq and the steadily deteriorating situation on the ground ... have scared the Indians off." In mid-October, when the Security Council finally passed a resolution giving New Delhi much of what it had once wanted, it refused to send troops anyway. So did Russia. In the end, only Turkey offered troops in the fall of 2003, and they were rejected by the Iraqi Governing Council.

Is it certain John Kerry would have enticed large numbers of foreign troops into Iraq? Of course not. But what is certain is that a window of opportunity existed—in the spring and summer of 2003—when foreign governments were far more open to the idea than they are now. That window didn't close by accident. It closed because the very people who today insist that bringing foreign troops into Iraq is impossible were then arguing that it was undesirable, at least if it meant a central role for the United Nations. Not bringing in foreign troops was, at least in part, a Bush administration choice, a choice enthusiastically endorsed by its conservative supporters.

Kerry's decisions would have been very different. If Bush supporters want to claim they would have been worse—even given all the tragedy that America's insufficient troop strength in Iraq has wrought—they should go ahead. But, if they want to call Kerry's current appeal for foreign troops a fantasy, they should at least acknowledge that they helped make it so.

PETER BEINART

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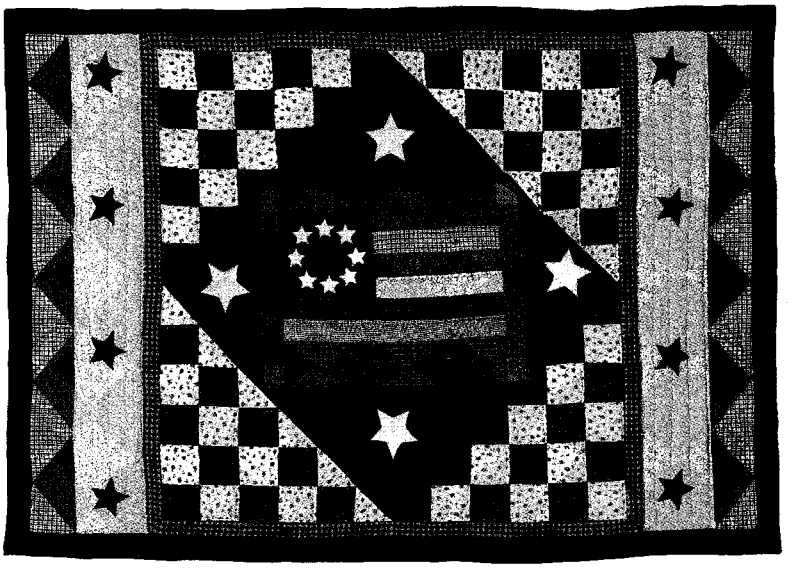

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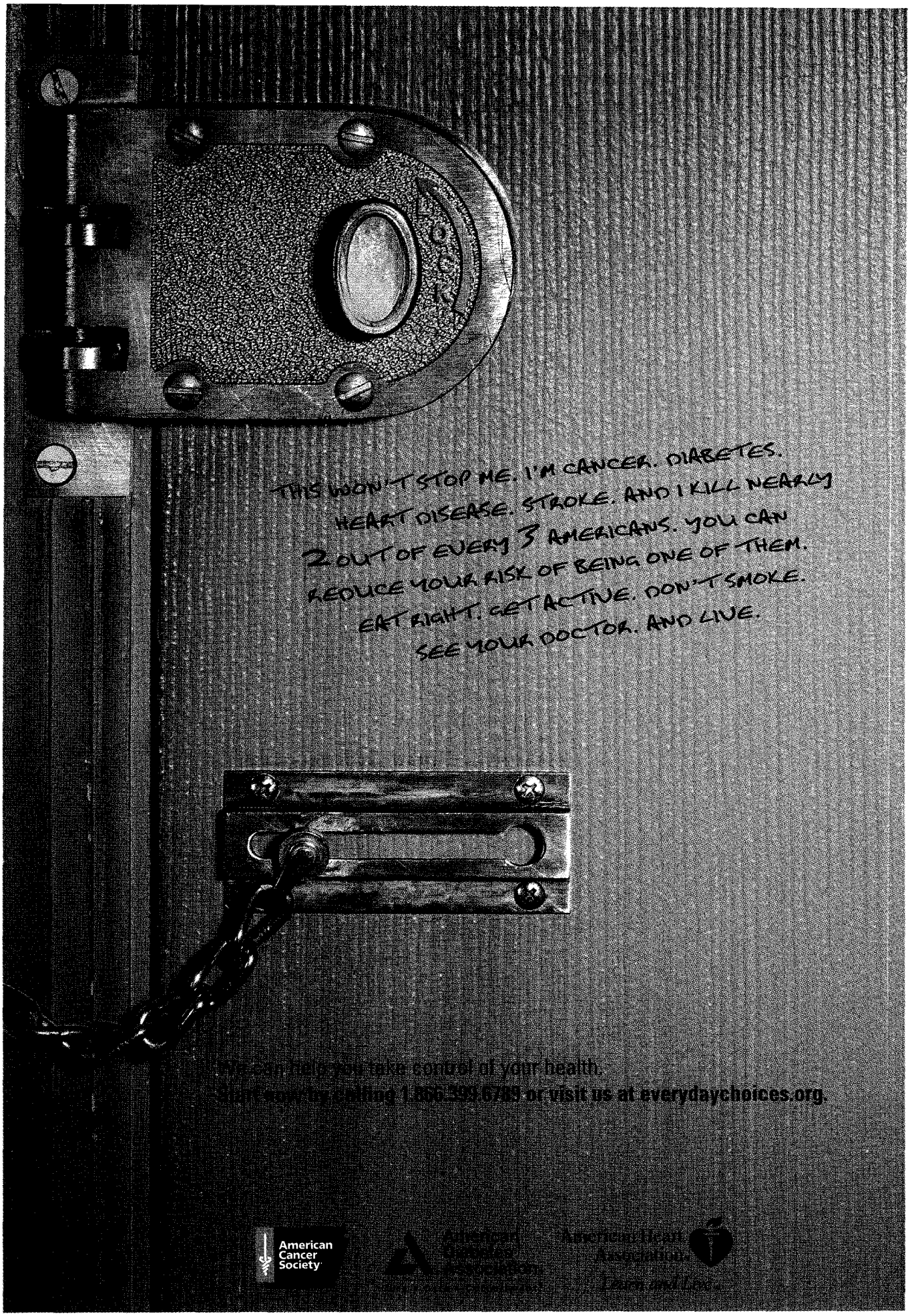
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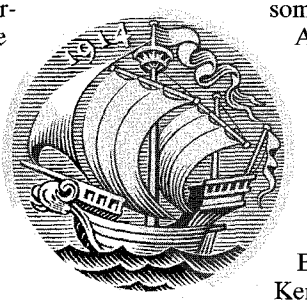
Flex Time

NEITHER GEORGE W. BUSH nor John Kerry has found much occasion to talk about the ongoing genocide in Darfur. Mention of the systematic destruction of western Sudan's farming tribes by Khartoum government proxies was ominously absent from both parties' nominating conventions. And Darfur is hardly a centerpiece of either candidate's stump speech. Not surprisingly, given the infrequency of their discussions of Darfur, the two candidates are less than fluent in the details of the massacre. In fact, during the first presidential debate, when asked what they would do about Darfur, both Kerry and Bush misrepresented how the United States has responded to the crisis.

Kerry erred when he criticized the president for failing to provide logistical support to the African Union (AU) troops monitoring the April cease-fire signed by Khartoum and Darfur rebel groups. "Right now, all the president is providing is humanitarian support," Kerry said. But that's not quite true. The United States footed the bill for the private contractor that set up the AU base camp and that is handling some logistics for the AU's small force in the field. Moreover, the State Department has earmarked an additional $20.5 million in support of a proposed expanded AU mission.

But Bush's comments were worse. He cited last year's U.S.-led intervention in Liberia as a model for what the United States should be doing in Sudan, noting, "We helped stabilize the situation [in Liberia] with some troops. And, when the African Union came, we moved [American troops] out." Unfortunately, the administration's strategy in Darfur bears little resemblance to the one it pursued in Liberia. In Liberia, the United States positioned three Navy warships within sight of the capital and dispatched 200 Marines to provide backup to West African peacekeepers. In Darfur, on the other hand, the Bush administration has ruled out sending any American troops, saying that U.S. armed forces are overstretched.

The administration treats Darfur more like a natural disaster than a murderous government-directed strategy. "We are not trying to punish the Sudanese people or the Sudanese government. We are trying to save lives," Secretary of State Colin Powell told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last month. The United States is offering a relief response when a political response is needed, dealing with the results of a crisis rather than its causes. And some members of the U.N. Security Council are happy to play along. Prodded by China and Russia, which have economic interests in Sudan, the Council has allowed Khartoum to continue killing after the cease-fire—without any consequences. Meanwhile, 50,000 Darfurians have died and 1.4 million have been driven from their homes.



The president is right about one thing, however: Liberia is a good model for Darfur. It will likely take several months to get an effective AU force up and running, since all members of the Union must sign off and outfitting the troops is laborious. But, as in Liberia, until the AU is ready, the United States should provide enough military aid to be the initial backbone of the force in Sudan. Certainly, the war in Iraq limits what Washington can do militarily. Yet officers that have led previous peacekeeping missions concede that the United States still has enough flexibility to send a battalion—500 to 900 soldiers—for a limited stabilization mission in Darfur. And, by sending a contingent of troops, the United States would send a vital psychological signal in a part of the world where havoc is wreaked by ragtag militias easily shocked and awed by American might. In Liberia, even a small number of American troops scared off irregulars who had never dealt with a professional army before. In Darfur, the United States could do the same.

During the debate, Kerry suggested he would be willing to send troops "if it took American forces to some degree to coalesce the African Union." In so doing, he made an important moral and political point. Emphasizing his willingness to intervene in Darfur without U.N. approval would help deflect Bush's criticism that a Kerry presidency would be a slave to international opinion, allowing foreign leaders to determine U.S. national interests and policy agendas. And, by hammering home this message, Kerry would show how absent Bush has been. After all, it is Bush, not Kerry, who is now presiding over 6,000 to 10,000 Darfurian deaths each month. It is up to Bush, as president, to stop the genocide. ■

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NOTEBOOK

PAUL BREMER, BLAMELESS . . . CONDI RICE, SHAMELESS

MISTAKES WERE MADE

IN TWO RECENT AND SUPPOSEDLY OFF-the-record talks, the United States' former Iraq viceroy, L. Paul Bremer, finally admitted there were never sufficient American troops in Iraq to secure the country. "The single most important change—the one thing that would have improved the situation—would have been having more troops in Iraq at the beginning and throughout" the occupation, he told a DePauw University audience in mid-September. Of course, that's not what Bremer told CBS's Bob Scheiffer last October: "Security is not a question of boots on the ground."

But don't think for a moment that Bremer is coming clean. He e-mailed *The Washington Post* to say that his statements only applied to the situation when he arrived in May 2003. Never mind his comment about the importance of more troops "throughout" the occupation, nor the illogic of suggesting that an insufficient troop level miraculously became sufficient after the insurgency *intensified*. Bremer's e-mail leads to the conclusion that the former ambassador is perfectly willing to admit mistakes—just as long as they're someone else's. Therefore, we look forward to accounts of Bremer's off-the-record talks repudiating his decision to disband the 400,000-man Iraqi army (which Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi called a "big mistake"); or when he essentially ignored Grand Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani's demand for direct elections in favor of a doomed "caucus" scheme; or when he told the *Post* last August that Iraq "is not a country in chaos." We especially look forward to hearing how those accumulated missteps on the road to disaster were the fault of others.

TALK THERAPY

WE'D LOVE TO LIST EVERY MISleading statement Condoleezza Rice has made, but, unfortunately, THE NEW REPUBLIC limits itself to about 40 pages per issue. So we thought two recent highlights from the summer and fall might work instead.

L. Paul Bremer

Just last Sunday, *The New York Times* ran a piece showing that Rice had falsely claimed some aluminum tubes in Iraq were "only really suited for nuclear weapons programs," even though it appears that only one CIA crackpot, identified as "Joe," had believed they were anything other than rocket casings. But, on the day the *Times* piece ran, Rice went on "This Week" with George Stephanopoulos to argue it was no big deal: "What we knew at the time was that there was, yes, a dispute in the intelligence agency about [the tubes]," but "the tubes were alongside a lot of other evidence." Except that "other evidence" was wrong, too. Well, touché, but, "George, the fact is that what you know today can affect what you do tomorrow but not what you did yesterday." Stephanopoulos, befuddled, took a desperate last swing: "Do you accept today that these tubes were likely for rockets, not nuclear weapons?" An easy one: "George, as I understand it, people are still debating this." Rice 1, Stephanopoulos 0.

In August, shortly after the arrest of a senior Al Qaeda operative in Pakistan, Rice appeared on "Late Edition" with Wolf Blitzer. Asked if releasing the operative's name had undermined ongoing investigations, Rice replied, "Well, I don't know what might have been going on in Pakistan. I will say this, that we did not, of course, publicly disclose his name." Blitzer interrupted, "He was disclosed in Washington on background." "On background," Rice continued, unfazed. "And the problem is that, when you're trying to strike a balance between giving enough information to the public . . . you're always weighing that against kind of operational considerations. We've tried to strike a balance." In sum: We caught a valuable source, so we told everyone his name but hid our own names—for the sake of balance. And "what might have been going on" in Pakistan was, after all, outside the national security adviser's purview. Game, set, match.

The origins of Rice's unflappability are the subject of some debate. Some analysts speculate she was dropped on her head as an adult sometime around 1999, leaving her with the ability to process incoming contradictions and keep talking without pause. Others say her genius lies simply in putting one word—any word—in front of the other. The final theory, from an analyst we'll call "Joe," is that rabid ponies attacked the national security adviser and devoured her sense of shame. But, if you asked us about this on CNN, we'd ignore this debate, since the evidence is "really only suited" for theory number three.

THE O'REILLY FACTOR

"WE WILL BE DOWN IN MIAMI for that debate, giving you the

DAVID COWLES

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best coverage. And I'm going to do it like a prizefight. I'm going to kind of come on the radio the day after the debate, and we're going to give you a numerical system—who won the debate and then how they won. ... I'm going to be as objective as possible, because I don't have a dog in the hunt." —Fox News's Bill O'Reilly, speaking about the first debate between George W. Bush and John Kerry on the September 23 broadcast of his radio program "Radio Factor with Bill O'Reilly"

"I may surprise you, but I'm not going to tell you who won the debate because I really don't have any right to tell you that. You should make up your own mind on that. ... I'll give you my opinion on various aspects of the debate, but I'm not going to tell you who won it. I mean, I think that's a little haughty. It's a little haughty to do that." —O'Reilly, speaking on the same radio program on October 1, after pundits had declared Kerry the winner of the first debate

YES, WHAT ABOUT POLAND?

"MY OPPONENT SAYS WE DIDN'T have any allies in this war. What's he say to Tony Blair? What's he say to Alexander Kwasniewski of Poland? ... Well, actually, he forgot Poland." —George W. Bush, during the first presidential debate on September 30

"Poland said Monday that it aims to withdraw all of its 2,500 troops from Iraq during the course of next year, a major disappointment for Washington which sees Warsaw as one of its staunchest allies in Iraq." —Agence France-Presse, October 4

YOU SAY TOMATO

"WARLORD IS A HARD WORD. I prefer to call them 'regional leaders.'" —Afghan President Hamid Karzai, cited by William Safire in his October 6 column in *The New York Times* ■

TNR.commentary

IRAQ'D

SPENCER ACKERMAN

WHEN HIS LIPS ARE MOVING: At 10:15 p.m. on October 3, reporters were e-mailed a statement from Donald Rumsfeld. It began, gloriously, "A question I answered today at an appearance before the Council on Foreign Relations regarding ties between Al Qaeda and Iraq regrettably was misunderstood." What did Rumsfeld need to walk back? Why, his striking admission the previous day that there were no significant ties between Al Qaeda and Iraq. Were his remarks "misunderstood"? Let's go to the transcript:

> QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, what exactly was the connection between Saddam Hussein and [Al Qaeda]?
>
> RUMSFELD: I tell you, I'm not going to answer the question. (LAUGHTER) I have seen the answer to that question migrate in the intelligence community over a period of a year in the most amazing way. ... To my knowledge, I have not seen any strong, hard evidence that links the two. I just read an intelligence report recently about one person who's connected to [Al Qaeda] who was in and out of Iraq. And it is the most tortured description of why he might have had a relationship and why he might not have had a relationship. ... The relationships between these folks are complicated. They evolve and change over time. ... So it is too complicated for me to try to pretend I'm the expert analyst on the subject, and for that I apologize.

You'll recall that Rumsfeld's September 2002 language linking Al Qaeda to Saddam—in such operative, collaborative relationships as giver and potential recipient of weapons of mass destruction—deployed such words as "bulletproof." So he was clearly an "expert" then. Now that he's strayed far from the administration's talking points, Rumsfeld has had to pretend to have been misinterpreted and send an e-mail filled with those same talking points. But the full text of Rumsfeld's remarks is plain.

&c.

NOAM SCHEIBER

DOES BUSH THINK OUR ALLIES DON'T KNOW IRAQ WAS A MISTAKE?: This has been bugging me since the first debate. The president keeps insisting there's no way to get more allies helping out in Iraq if you keep insisting the war was a mistake, as John Kerry does. ("I can imagine him walking into the leaders of the world saying, 'We need your help, but Iraq is a mistake,'" the president said recently.)

But isn't the reality exactly the opposite? Pretty much every potential ally in the world thinks Iraq was a mistake. As long as that's the case, don't you stand a greater chance of winning them over by acknowledging this rather than treating them like idiots? If I'm France or Russia, I'm going to be much more receptive to a pitch that says, "Look, we know we screwed up, but we need your help so Iraq doesn't become an even bigger problem than it already is." The alternative pitch—"Hey, everything's going great. We'd still do it the same way if we had it to do all over again. Oh, and by the way, would you mind kicking in a few thousand troops?"—doesn't strike me as so compelling.

WILL YOU PLEASE STICK WITH IRAQ, PLEASE?: From the October 3 *New York Times*:

> And some Democrats questioned whether it made sense for Mr. Kerry to try to turn the subject away from Iraq at a time that continuing violence there was raising doubts among some voters about Mr. Bush's credentials to manage foreign policy crises.
>
> But Mr. Kerry's aides and Congressional Democrats argued that Thursday's presidential debate—confined to foreign policy issues at the insistence of Mr. Bush's aides—gave Mr. Kerry credibility on this subject, allowing him to pivot to the critique of Mr. Bush on the home front that Mr. Kerry has long thought is his path to victory.

Well, put me down as agreeing with "some Democrats." The point isn't that Kerry had to establish credibility on Iraq. The point is that Bush is much more vulnerable on Iraq than on the economy—particularly since the current economic data just isn't that bad. Now, I understand that emphasizing the economy may pay dividends in specific battlegrounds, the most obvious being Ohio. But it just strikes me as weird for Kerry to be moving away from the subject that got him back into the race, particularly at a time when outside events are making that subject particularly compelling as a campaign issue. Worse, the final jobs number before the election comes out Friday, the day of the second presidential debate. If you're Kerry, you're obviously much better insulated from good news on the jobs front if you've been talking about Iraq all week instead of how bad the economy is.

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Campaign Journal

Local Hero

BY RYAN LIZZA

WITHOUT MUCH NOTICE, the slogan on the signs at John Kerry's events has changed. STRONGER AT HOME, RESPECTED IN THE WORLD, the phrase omnipresent on the Kerry trail since the Democratic convention in July, is rarely found these days. The familiar foreign policy tag line has been replaced with a domestic one: FIGHTING FOR US (or, sometimes, FIGHTING FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS). The phrase is now plastered everywhere at Kerry events: on huge banners that serve as backdrops in the town-hall meetings the candidate hosts in preparation for the second presidential debate; on the front of his podium when he delivers an important TelePrompTer speech on the economy in Orlando. It appears in giant letters sewn into the carpet covering the stage at one recent stop. It has even been translated into Spanish. At a rally with Latino congressional leaders in central Florida, home to a growing Puerto Rican community that Democrats are targeting, the phrase appears on placards as LUCHANDO POR NOSOTROS.

Flip on the television in a battleground state and you'll see a similar change in message. Right after the first debate in Miami, which was dominated by Iraq, the Kerry campaign largely stopped talking about the war in its advertising. Instead, they continually aired a new ad titled "Powerful"—as in, the folks Kerry is fighting. "The cost of living goes up, but George Bush and the Republicans don't help the middle class," the announcer says in the spot. "Drug companies get a one hundred thirty-nine billion dollar bailout. Drug prices skyrocket. CEOs get big corporate tax breaks for shipping our jobs overseas. The Saudi royal family gets special favors. Gas prices soar." On the stump, Kerry's speeches are now laced with this populist rhetoric. His new catchphrase is "I've got your back," and his economic critique of the administration is often boiled down to, as he said at one recent stop, "They've made a choice that helps the powerful."

Much of this transition has gone unnoticed, because the national press has been focused on the daily to-and-fro between Bush and Kerry, which is news, rather than Kerry's rejiggering of his old policies into a new message framework, which isn't. In fact, traveling with Kerry in the days between the first two debates is like watching two campaigns unfold. One consists of Kerry's stump speech and his advertising, and it is usually eagerly reported by the local press. The other consists of the carefully chosen barbs Kerry delivers on a daily basis about Bush, which are intended to give the traveling press corps ledes for the day. In the first campaign, Ohio reporters listen to Kerry speak at a town hall and eagerly snap up a press release from Kerry's local flack about "Ohio-headquartered corporations reporting unrepatriated foreign profits on which no U.S. tax is ever expected to be paid at the end of 2003." In the second campaign, the traveling press listens to the same presentation and mostly writes about Kerry's newest attack on Bush.

WHAT THE NATIONAL press is largely ignoring in the first campaign is that Kerry seems to have found a happy equilibrium in the long-running debate about how Democrats should talk about the economy. In 2000, Al Gore's pivot to "people versus the powerful" populism was either blamed for his loss to Bush or praised as the key to his victory in the popular vote, depending on where one came down on the issue. Populism became an even more loaded term when Bob Shrum, Kerry's top wordsmith, ad-maker, and strategist, signed on with the campaign. Shrum's candidates have been "fighting the powerful" at both the Senate and presidential levels for 30 years, and many Democrats sniped that Shrum would eventually have Kerry doing the same. But, for months, there has been little trace of Shrumian populism in Kerry's stump speech and ads. It was a great irony. Gore's populism had been a tough sell in 2000 because the economy was in good shape. But, with swing states like Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia suffering massive manufacturing job losses—and with Kerry bleeding support from white downscale voters—the times actually seemed ideal for a dash of economic populism. Yet it was as though Shrum had been spooked by all the criticism.

But then, last Saturday, in what the campaign billed as a major speech similar to the candidate's recent address on Iraq, Kerry laid out his new populist pitch. There are some differences between how Kerry is talking about the economy and how Gore did. Although the economy is worse, Kerry's rhetoric is more measured. While Gore had to exaggerate his point, Kerry has only to cite Bush's record. The campaign insists there isn't a conscious shift toward populism, but that the rhetoric is simply inevitable when discussing Bush's record. "This is not a 'people versus the powerful' message, but about the choices [Bush] has made," Kerry's policy director, Sarah Bianchi, who also worked for Gore, told me after Kerry's Orlando speech. "Every time they made a choice, they made it for Halliburton, for drug companies. They didn't make it for the middle class. It's not a deliberate effort to go to populism. ... It's not the same as 'powerful interests fighting against us.' You have a record that inevitably makes you do it." (An early script for the ad "Powerful" read, "The powerful and well connected are getting what they want" from Bush and the GOP. But the final language was dialed back to the more Clintonian formulation about how "Bush and the Republicans don't help the middle class.") Instead of railing against

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powerful interests himself, Kerry prefers to show evidence that Bush keeps siding with them, against everyone else. "When he could have saved American jobs, George Bush chose a proposal to cut taxes for corporations that shipped them overseas," Kerry said in Orlando. "When he could have cut the cost of health care and insured more Americans, George Bush chose to propose billions for HMOs. ... When he could have cut the cost of prescription drugs, the Bush administration chose to push through a Medicare bill that gives one hundred thirty-nine billion dollars in profits to the big drug companies." And so on.

EVEN THOUGH KERRY has made this transition in his paid media and stump speeches, the national coverage hasn't caught up. The disconnect can be explained by another lesson the Kerry campaign learned from Gore: how to deal with the press. Spending four days on Kerry's plane after the first debate revealed a far healthier dynamic between the two sides than what existed in 2000. First of all, the addition of new communications staffers has breathed life into the relationship. Reporters praise Mike McCurry, the ex-Clinton White House press secretary, who now travels on the plane with Kerry, but they probably would have loved any new flack. There is always a honeymoon period between spokesmen and reporters, and sending in new people to massage the press has created some goodwill and reduced the tension that had built up on both sides of the flack/scribe divide.

One lesson the new regime has mastered is that feeding the press something new every day, even if it's a little off-message, is better than trying to get reporters to cover things they don't regard as news. Some Democrats have bemoaned Kerry's transition to the economy, arguing that Kerry needs to keep talking about Iraq. But, in practice, he's doing both. McCurry and other staffers make sure the senator hits anti-Bush targets of opportunity that pop up in the headlines each day. "It's not either-or, and it's not a zero-sum game," McCurry told reporters aboard Kerry's plane last week when asked about the transition. Almost every day, at the top of his remarks, Kerry makes a new anti-Bush point, usually one about national security. Last Sunday, in a town hall about the economy in Austintown, Ohio, he seized on a lengthy *New York Times* article detailing how the administration ignored analysts who argued that Iraq's aluminum tubes were for rockets, not a nuclear program. The next day, he jumped on a *Wall Street Journal* article and attacked the administration for its failure to create a comprehensive terrorist watch list. Aides often tell the traveling reporters that these comments are coming, so there is no ambiguity about what's new that day. Often the result is that the local press writes about the main theme of Kerry's stump speech—these days, the populist economic stuff—while the traveling press concentrates on the comments teed up especially for them.

This daily feeding is one reason Kerry has avoided one of the pitfalls of the Gore campaign, which was savaged by a drumbeat of stories about his clothes, makeup, exaggerations, and other tangential issues that had nothing to do with what he was talking about on any given day. (In addition, most news organizations have helped prevent a return to the poisonous atmosphere that infected the Gore campaign by assigning two reporters to cover Kerry. Having correspondents switch off has lessened the chances of what reporters call the "reverse Stockholm Syndrome" of 2000, whereby journalists stuck on the trail for weeks on end learn to hate their captors and the candidate himself.)

One set of Kerry advisers is now controlling what most Americans see on television, and another set is massaging what they see in the news. "Shrum controls the TV screen. The other guys control the plane," says one Democratic consultant. Lately, it seems to be working. ■

Ken Salazar, Democratic superstar.

Crossing Over

BY MICHAEL CROWLEY

TRINIDAD, COLORADO

IF DENVER IS the heart of Colorado, Trinidad is a capillary. It's a dusty little outpost about 200 miles south of the mile-high city and just north of the New Mexico border. Trinidad is a weary-looking place whose main drag is peppered with boarded-up shops and dank saloons and whose main attraction is a grim memorial honoring fallen miners from this coal-rich region. It is a typically depressed rural town, in other words. But Trinidad also has a bizarre claim to fame. It is unofficially known, according to the *Lonely Planet* travel guide, as "the sex-change capital of the USA."

As we drove into Trinidad last week, I asked Ken Salazar about this strange honorific. At the time, Colorado's Democratic nominee for Senate was at the wheel of my car—a courteous gesture to facilitate my note-taking and one that seemed typical of a man without a self-important bone in his body. As we rolled through wide-open plains, Salazar, who grew up on a ranch not far from here, was in his element. He had traded the suit and tie he wears as Colorado's attorney general for a Western denim look: jean jacket, blue jeans, and the white cowboy hat that has become his trademark.

You might suspect Salazar of wearing a costume until you hear him talk about the region. As we passed through different counties, he effortlessly ticked off their populations and translated their Spanish names. ("We're in Las Animas County. It means, 'The Spirits.'") He explained what year towns were founded and what their main industries are. Just off Trinidad's main street, we passed an im-

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pressive red brick building. "They are known for their brick in this town," Salazar remarked matter-of-factly. "I have one on my desk." Salazar said all this in his unalterably placid voice; he projects an inner tranquility that suggests a man who has just tucked his children into bed or enjoyed a very thorough massage.

And, yes, he knows about Trinidad's gender-bending specialty. "Yeah," Salazar chuckled, the little grin expanding. "There was a doctor here who developed a specialty in sex-change operations, so people from around the country would come here." He pauses, choosing words carefully. "Shows you the diversity of America."

As a 49-year-old up-and-coming Democrat, Ken Salazar hasn't been one-tenth as hyped as the younger, swoon-inducing Barack Obama. But, should he win his tight race here—and several recent polls have shown him with a small-to-medium lead over beer baron Pete Coors—he'll join Obama in Washington as a new Democratic rock star. As a senator, Salazar would become one of the most prominent Latinos in national politics—second only to New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson. (Florida's Republican Senate candidate, Mel Martinez, is also hoping to join this club and signal to Latinos that the GOP is their ally, making it all the more important for Democrats that Salazar succeed.) If elected, Salazar would bring to Washington a claim few other Democratic minority politicians, including Obama, can make: He will have survived a competitive statewide election in a pro-Bush state with the help of conservative swing voters and even some Republicans.

Which is why Salazar has driven for hours to reach Trinidad. Given that Colorado has 190,000 more registered Republicans than Democrats, Salazar can't count on Democratic cities like Denver and Boulder for victory. He needs to rack up huge margins in more conservative rural areas—in places like Trinidad. Once in town, Salazar met with a group of enthusiastic Democrats at a local party office. Most gushed over him. But one skeptic challenged the mood. "A lot of people go to Washington and become federal-minded," the man says. "Are you gonna become federal minded?" Salazar slowly raises his arms, spreads open his palms, and looks the man in the eye. His hands are marked from working on his ranch. "These calluses on these hands will never let me forget from where I come," Salazar says. The man nods his head in approval. And soon, Salazar is back in the car, headed off to another lonely rural town.

COLORADO IS ROUGH turf for Democrats. As it happened, Salazar first hopped into my car outside Colorado Springs, just a few miles from the national headquarters of Dr. James Dobson's rabidly religious-conservative organization Focus on the Family (which I later heard broadcasting a radio program warning against the indoctrination of young people with the "homosexual agenda"). The state offers a microcosm of the problem Democrats confront nationally: the skepticism of culturally conservative rural voters has outweighed the party's support in big cities, and Christian-conservative and pro-military voters in exurbs like Colorado Springs offer Republicans a firm bulwark. As a result, it has been a decade since any Democrat has won a major election in Colorado—except for Salazar, who, after a career as a lawyer and an aide to former Governor Roy Romer, was twice elected attorney general. He won his 2002 reelection campaign by a 20-point margin.

Salazar's success so far has little to do with ideology; he is not a policy wonk. He is a fairly moderate Democrat whose differences with the national party are more tonal than substantive. Salazar never talks about party control of the Senate, for instance, and has yet to appear publicly with John Kerry. Yet his overall platform—which calls for preserving President Bush's middle-class tax cuts, more "urgency" on homeland security, and more international support in Iraq—roughly mirrors Kerry's.

Rather, Salazar's two key assets are personal. The first is his ability to connect with rural voters who might otherwise be skeptical of a Democrat. Those calloused hands are no fraud: He is one of eight children to grow up on a ranch in a farming area in south-central Colorado with no telephone, power lines, or running water. "We brought in water in fifty-gallon buckets," Salazar explains. "We were poor; we didn't have money for almost anything." This hard-scrabble identity has so far been crucial to Salazar's rise. "The old math of the state was that you would win as a Democrat by driving up the margins in the metro counties around Denver," says Mandy Grunwald, Salazar's Washington-based media consultant. "But there just aren't enough votes there for a Democrat anymore, even a centrist Democrat. You really need to build a coalition that goes beyond that. And what Ken has been able to do in his past campaigns is reach into rural areas. He's one of them. He's not a Denver candidate."

So far, Salazar's new formula has been working. A mid-September *Rocky Mountain News* poll showed him with a 59-to-35 point advantage over Coors among rural voters—even as Bush leads Kerry among those voters by three points. "A lot of people have approached us and said, 'I'm voting for Bush, but I'm also voting for you, Ken,'" says Salazar Press Secretary Cody Wertz.

Salazar's second advantage is his ethnicity. Latinos now make up nearly one-fifth of Colorado's population, and their numbers are growing fast. Although Colorado Latinos lean Democratic, as they do nationally, they are susceptible to Republican appeals. (In 2000, Bush carried Colorado with the help of 33 percent of its Latino voters.) But the *News* poll showed Salazar leading Coors among Latinos by 68 percent to 23. And, while Latino voters often turn out in low numbers, the Salazar campaign is hoping they will vote in droves for one of their own. "A theory behind the Salazar campaign, particularly with Latino voters, is that they are going to turn out people who usually do not turn out," says Eric Sondermann, a Colorado Democratic consultant. One possible predictor of what could happen, Sondermann recalls, was the

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1983 campaign of Denver Mayor Federico Pena, who triumphed thanks in part to a surge in Latino turnout.

Yet, while he would be just the fourth Latino to serve in the Senate (and the first in more than 25 years), like Obama, Salazar has avoided depicting his candidacy as a historic civil rights crusade. "It's not something that Salazar seems to have played up to this point," says Denver pollster Lori Weigel, who conducted the *News* survey. As a result, Salazar hasn't been branded as an "ethnic" candidate, and his support among white voters—among whom he is roughly tied with Coors—hasn't suffered. When Weigel's survey asked voters what phrases came to mind when they thought of the candidates, large chunks of voters offered such responses for Salazar as "attorney general," "Democrat," and "positive values." An observant 2 percent even offered "cowboy hat." But "Latino" didn't register.

SALAZAR'S SUCCESS IS particularly impressive when you consider the strength of his opponent. The Coors family is the closest thing Colorado has to royalty. From the site of its sprawling brewery complex in the Denver suburb of Golden, the Coors empire stretches across the state—encompassing downtown Denver's Coors Field, thousands of Coors billboards, and the ubiquitous Silver Bullet brew itself. But being Mr. Beer has proved complicated for Coors. During his primary campaign, a right-wing group attacked Coors for running TV ads featuring "scantily-clad girls and frenzied drinking scenes" that were "degrading to women and nearly pornographic." Coors the candidate and Coors the company—which has spent years trying to recover from discrimination charges and resulting liberal boycotts—fled from one another over the issue of gay marriage. After Coors said he would support the federal marriage amendment, the brewery even launched a $1 million ad campaign in the gay press affirming that "[w]e do not support discrimination against the GLBT community—via legislation or otherwise"—suggesting, by implication, that its chairman does. More recently, the deaths of two Colorado college students in separate binge-drinking tragedies have left Coors regretting some recent musings about the benefits of a lower legal drinking age.

But the key to the race so far has been Salazar's impressive ability to reverse traditional party stereotypes against Coors. During Colorado's 2002 Senate race, Democratic nominee Tom Strickland blew a lead against GOP Senator Wayne Allard after Allard depicted himself as the champion of hard-working rural voters and Strickland as an effete Denver "lawyer-lobbyist." This time, Salazar has turned Coors into the rich Denver elitist. Salazar often speaks of having "walked in the shoes" of ordinary Coloradans. And he savaged Coors with a TV ad featuring Coors's dunderheaded comment, "I don't know what a common man is." As a result, Coors has been stuck with a two-dimensional image. Weigel's poll found that voters linked Coors with terms like "beer" and "businessman"—and not with campaign themes like tax cuts or security. Coors has tried to fire back by tagging Salazar as a faux-cowboy lawyer in league with liberal Democrats, but so far the image hasn't stuck.

Maybe that's because it isn't true. Soon after his visit to Trinidad, Salazar stopped in the even smaller, sadder town of Walsenburg, about half an hour north along I-25. Speaking before a group of local Democrats who shivered against a bracing early fall wind blowing in from the plains, he once again sounded almost as if he were in his hometown: "I have been through this road probably two hundred to three hundred times." And no one doubted him for a moment. ■

Kerry's covert op-ed war.

Mum's the Word

BY LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

THE *NEW YORK TIMES* ran an unusual editor's note last week. It alerted readers to the fact that the *Times* had asked Charles A. Kupchan, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, to review two books critical of President Bush's foreign policy. It also alerted readers to the fact that Kupchan serves as "an unpaid adviser to John F. Kerry's presidential campaign. Had The Times known of that affiliation, it would not have asked him to review political books during an election season." *Times* culture editor Jonathan Landman explained the decision to run the note this way: "We're not blameless. We didn't ask him if he has an affiliation."

Why should they have to? Because Kupchan is one of many Kerry foreign policy advisers who, publicly at least, decline to bill themselves as Kerry foreign policy advisers. They fail to do so even though they have signed formal agreements with the Kerry campaign making them exactly that, even though they chair or belong to the campaign's "policy teams," and even though, in many cases, they act as its surrogates. To take another example of this sleight of hand, in a July op-ed in the Baltimore *Sun*, the Brookings Institution's Shibley Telhami—who doubles as coordinator of Kerry's Middle East reform team, a fact not revealed to the *Sun*—contends that, to judge by Muslim resentment of Bush's policies in the region, "it is difficult to imagine that al-Qaida would view the record of the past three years as having been anything but successful."

No doubt, Telhami—like Kupchan, an accomplished scholar and analyst—believes this to be true. "What I say after [the campaign] asks me for advice is the same as I say before," Telhami says. Kupchan, too, insists, "When I write or speak publicly, I do so as an independent analyst and scholar, and I guard carefully my intellectual integrity." But this elides the point. The campaign has concerns other

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than intellectual integrity, foremost among them the "amplification"—a term favored at Kerry headquarters—of its foreign policy message. Hence, in messages from Kerry aides to members of the campaign's advisory teams, the stipulation holds: Go forth and spread the word, but say it's your own. As a result, when these scholars take to the airwaves and the newspapers in agreement with Kerry's positions, they do so under their own names and affiliations. This leaves readers completely unaware of an expert's affiliation and makes it impossible to disentangle a scholar's views from the campaign's. "If you've signed on to a campaign, even in an unpaid capacity," says the Center for Public Integrity's Bill Allison, "and you don't disclose your affiliation when writing about campaign issues, you're misleading the public."

WHEN IT COMES to foreign policy, the Kerry campaign suffers from a disadvantage that has nothing to do with either the candidate or his message. As with all incumbent reelection campaigns, the Bush team can rely on current and former administration officials as surrogates and advisers—though it, too, occasionally depends on outsiders like former Reagan official Ken Adelman, who, even if he has no formal position, might as well be part of the Bush campaign. The Kerry team, by contrast, must rely more heavily on surrogates and advisers who *want to be* administration officials. Some, such as Richard Holbrooke, boast official campaign titles. But others, notably those who belong to a network of dozens of foreign policy teams that have been formally incorporated into the campaign, do not. These experts—who have signed up to advise Kerry but rarely divulge this fact to editors—have helped the campaign to level the foreign policy playing field.

Typically, the campaign e-mails requests to team coordinators, who then forward them along—sometimes verbatim, sometimes revised—to their colleagues. In many cases, the messages boil down to simple research requests. In other instances, the e-mails ask for more. Here, for example, is a June 17 request, which coordinators of Kerry's Europe team e-mailed to their colleagues:

> [W]e are actively seeking team members who would be willing to write an op-ed *under their own name and affiliation* which lays out the task before President Bush in advance of the upcoming NATO summit in Istanbul, June 28–29. The Kerry line is that we will continue to need troops and resources in Iraq for some time to come, and that NATO could be a source for assistance. There are people at the campaign who can assist in placing op-eds, but we would likely need drafts by early next week. [emphasis mine]

Objections to this type of "amplification," once they're raised, genuinely seem to trouble several of Kerry's foreign policy advisers. But they don't make much of an impression on the campaign itself. "The [foreign policy] teams were always envisioned as message amplification," says a full-time Kerry aide. "We weren't getting messages in the press or any traction in the media, so, if they wanted to get stuff out there under their own names, fine." Nor, as a campaign document titled "CAMPAIGN GUIDELINES, FOREIGN POLICY" makes clear, has the Kerry team given its advisers much choice but to use their own names. After thanking prospective advisers for their participation and instructing them that any material they submit to team coordinators will "become the exclusive property of the Kerry campaign," the agreement warns, "you should not act, even informally, as a spokesperson or representative of the campaign unless expressly asked to do so by the campaign staff"—this, even as the very same staff exhorts advisers to take the candidate's case to the press.

The mystery is why the Kerry campaign would formalize its relationship with foreign policy advisers who couldn't bill themselves as foreign policy advisers in the first place. Legal issues, for one. Campaign lawyers rejected the idea of coordinating with advisory groups from outside organizations like the Alliance for American Leadership, a network of Democratic foreign policy task forces on which the Kerry campaign relied heavily before forming its own teams in the spring. At the same time, leaders of the supposedly nonpartisan think tanks that line Massachusetts Avenue, particularly Brookings, didn't want their scholars publicly affiliated with the campaign; this way, they wouldn't be. Finally, there was the specter of hundreds of foreign policy wonks claiming to speak on behalf of—and inevitably contradicting—the candidate himself. As Kerry national security spokesman Mark Kitchens explains the agreement, "When [team members] are doing amplification, they're not acting as formal representatives of the campaign because their views do not necessarily reflect the views of the campaign."

WHATEVER THE MOTIVE, the effect of the arrangement is clear. Asking scholars to tout the "Kerry line" under their own names and affiliations pollutes public discourse. The relationship exacts no price from the campaign itself. But it makes the scholars who have agreed to its terms, along with the institutions that house them, into partisan agents. This practice cheapens the press, too, since readers cannot pick up a newspaper without stumbling across a campaign adviser pretending to be something other than what he or she is.

In response, some editors have taken precautions. David Shipley, op-ed editor at the *Times*, says the question of campaign affiliations is "something we ask [contributors] pretty much right off the bat. Then we go through as many of the different shadings and levels of involvement as possible." As for the hundreds of media outlets with less stringent checks, if more than one foreign policy expert per page has kind things to say about Kerry, make an assumption: They probably work for him. ■

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Why Kerry's great on energy.
Turn On

BY GREGG EASTERBROOK

GEORGE W. BUSH and John Kerry probably differ more on energy policy than on any major issue except abortion, yet news organizations have said barely a word about their positions. Energy policy ought to be a limelight issue this election year. Congress has not passed an energy bill in more than a decade. Oil consumption and oil imports continue to rise. Natural gas prices are high and supplies are tight. Average fuel efficiency of new cars is the lowest in 15 years. The United States continues to supplicate to Persian Gulf dictators for petroleum. And greenhouse gases from fossil-fuel use continue to accumulate.

Early in his term, Bush called energy policy his top concern: "We're in an energy crisis now," he said in March 2001. But, since September 11, 2001, energy has vanished as a White House priority, though production and consumption trends remain unchanged. Even the infamous Cheney energy plan—the content of which is nowhere near as bad as pundits made it sound—has been forsaken by the White House. Meanwhile, Bush has offered only token gestures toward the greatest need in energy policy: higher miles-per-gallon (MPG) standards to restrain America's ever-growing thirst for imported oil.

Kerry, by contrast, has made that need the centerpiece of his energy policy—for years. Detractors often ask what Kerry has done in the Senate; one answer is energy policy. In 2002, Kerry joined with Senator John McCain to advocate higher fuel-economy standards for cars, pickup trucks, and SUVs. The Kerry-McCain MPG proposal was one of the big Capitol Hill events of 2002, not least because Democrats from SUV-producing states fought it furiously. That, on energy policy, Kerry showed the political courage to oppose his own party—and the United Auto Workers—while preparing a primary run is a sign of character that deserves notice in the presidential race.

If elected president, Kerry might be the nation's first executive since Jimmy Carter to offer meaningful reform in energy policy. Today, Carter is remembered as a well-meaning bumbler, but his energy decisions had historic impact. Carter deregulated oil and natural gas while imposing a big increase in vehicle MPG. These actions converted the oil and gas shortages of the 1970s into the surpluses of the 1980s, and cracked the Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC) "price maintenance" monopoly. One reason four consecutive presidents—Ronald Reagan, Bush 41, Bill Clinton, and Bush 43—have been able to pay little attention energy policy is that Carter's decisions worked out so well.

But the time bought by Carter's energy reforms is running out. In 2003, the United States burned about 20 million barrels of petroleum each day, of which 11 million barrels, or 55 percent, were imported—almost double 1974 levels. Rising global demand for oil, especially Chinese demand, suggests that petroleum will become ever-more expensive in real-dollar terms. Increasing U.S. imports ensure a worsening balance of trade, and increasing consumption raises fears of an artificial greenhouse effect. Maintaining the energy status quo, the central trend of which is ever-higher petroleum consumption by gas-guzzling SUVs, is a formula for constantly rising oil prices, as well as endless wars and entanglements with dictators in the Persian Gulf.

All presidential candidates since Richard Nixon, including Bush and Kerry, have promised energy independence. That goal is unrealistic. "Politicians talk about energy independence because this phrase polls extremely well, but the whole idea is nonsense," says a former White House energy adviser. But, with moderate improvements in the gas mileage of new vehicles, it is possible within a single decade to eliminate the amount of oil the United States imports from our most dangerous, and least stable, suppliers: The Persian Gulf states. Kerry is the first major presidential candidate in a generation to offer a serious plan to make this happen.

IN FOUR YEARS, Bush has done nothing to change America's craving for Gulf oil. Bush has opposed significant strengthening of MPG standards for vehicles, continued to hold SUVs and the misnamed "light" pickups to lower MPG strictures than regular cars, continued to exempt some altogether, and enacted a tax break for those who buy the heaviest SUVs. Bush supports oil-drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), but, in even the best case, ANWR production will only supplant depletion of domestic oil fields in the contiguous 48 states; the reason to drill ANWR is to maintain domestic production, not to provide an alternative to Saudi oil. When the topic is oil efficiency, Bush always brings up "fuel-cell" cars that run on hydrogen. But, while it is an important research area, hydrogen has no immediate value to energy policy. It is an energy medium, like electricity, not an energy source; and, at present, there is no way to obtain hydrogen without expending substantial amounts of fossil fuels. Changing the subject to hydrogen is Bush's way of diverting attention from his inaction on vehicle MPG.

Kerry's energy proposals are dramatically different. Most important, Kerry advocates substantial improvement in the fuel efficiency of vehicles, including SUVs and pickups. Kerry would ban ANWR drilling but build a pipeline to Alaska's North Slope natural gas fields (which Bush also says he supports, but hasn't done much about), cancel the Yucca Mountain facility for atomic-reactor wastes (though he is not necessarily anti–nuclear power), mandate that 20 percent of electricity be generated from renewable sources by 2020, and invest billions more than Bush in clean-coal technology. Though Kerry rarely mentions greenhouse

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gases or global warming—political consultants fear "global warming" has become code for "surrender authority to the United Nations"—his plan would reduce U.S. carbon emissions, which are proportional to fossil fuel burned. Kerry's ideas would cause the United States to cut carbon emissions through domestic policy-making: In the Senate, he voted against the Kyoto greenhouse gas treaty. Energy policy and greenhouse reform have become the same issue, and Kerry's proposal recognizes that fact—one of its major advantages over Bush's energy plans.

To be sure, there are problems with some of Kerry's suggestions. His opposition to the Yucca Mountain facility may be driven by the fact that no vote-seeker can campaign in Nevada unless he is anti-Yucca. But the United States must have a permanent storage place for waste from power reactors, and, at this point, the objections to Yucca Mountain are either farfetched (we can't be sure what the geology of Nevada will be in 10,000 years!) or based on scientific illiteracy. Plus, if you really believe that storing atomic waste deep underground in sturdy containers in a modern facility 100 miles from the nearest population center is too dangerous, where do you think atomic waste is being stored now? It is sitting in rusting holding ponds at nuclear reactor stations, most of which were designed in the 1950s and are located close to cities. If you're against Yucca Mountain, you're in favor of keeping atomic waste in rusting holding ponds.

Kerry's call for 20 percent of electricity to come from renewable sources by 2020 also has problems. Kerry defines renewable power as "wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass," but, together, these sources account for only about 1 percent of electric generation. Even a successful effort to develop them might only double that number to 2 percent. Because environmentalists despise dams, Kerry doesn't discuss hydropower, which today generates far more zero-emission energy than wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass combined, and which offers much more immediate potential for increased production. In particular, there are many old facilities where output would increase if 1930s-era generators were replaced with modern equipment. Yet, instead of demanding that power dams be modernized, environmental lobbies are demanding that they be taken down. It's a small disappointment that Kerry does not show the same valor in opposing anti-hydro sentiment as he does in facing MPG needs.

Finally, there are two flaws in Kerry's plan to provide $10 billion to develop so-called "clean coal"—systems that burn coal while producing fewer greenhouse emissions. First, Washington has been sponsoring clean-coal research for years. A Bush-backed project with the incredible name Integrated Sequestration and Hydrogen Research Initiative—just imagine it: "My fellow Americans, this administration has made our nation a leader in integrated sequestration!"—is already building a pilot plant that will burn coal to manufacture hydrogen and be nearly greenhouse-neutral, injecting carbon by-products back into the Earth. The second problem with Kerry's clean-coal program is that there are already clean-coal systems that work, but utilities are reluctant to use them because they are so expensive. A generating process called "gasification combined-cycle combustion" is available now and offers big reductions in pollution from coal, but it costs notably more. Most likely, the board of directors of any publicly owned utility would not let the company build combined-cycle facilities, since this would violate their fiduciary responsibility to maximize returns.

Market forces alone will never cause utilities to adopt the most advanced clean-coal combustion or carbon sequestration. Government must require such technology, either directly, by imposing greenhouse limits on utilities, or indirectly, by placing a cap on carbon emissions and then allowing utilities to trade permits. This "cap and trade" approach was spectacularly successful in reducing acid rain. But Kerry's energy plan says nothing about it. Of course, neither does Bush's. Until a president stakes his credibility on binding action to put advanced coal systems into use, clean-coal talk is just pleasant political blather.

ITS FLAWS ASIDE, Kerry's plan is remarkable in its willingness to face the gas-mileage issue. No politician wants to be the one to say that monstrous SUVs and high-horsepower vehicles of any size are bad for national security because they entangle us in Gulf politics, bad for the greenhouse effect because they release great quantities of carbon, and bad for drivers and passengers because they increase highway fatalities. Fear of making these statements is why Reagan, Clinton, and both Bushes shunned action on fuel efficiency.

Official overall mileage of new U.S. vehicles rose from about 14 MPG in the late '70s to a peak of 22 MPG in 1987 and has since declined to 21 MPG. These figures, however, are based on unrealistic tests in which cars are accelerated gently and are never driven above the speed limit. The real-world overall mileage of new vehicles is probably 20 percent lower: a pathetic 17 MPG. As more SUVs and other guzzlers have been added to the roads, and as the number of miles the average driver logs each year has risen, oil demand has continued to grow.

A 2001 National Academy of Sciences study says that overall mileage can be improved by about one-third, using existing technology, without sacrificing safety or comfort and without forcing people into tiny, crash-vulnerable cars. But, when the Academy released its findings, Bush shelved the subject, employing the time-honored dodge of requesting further study. Kerry, in contrast, offered legislation to implement the improvement.

The Kerry-McCain proposal, introduced in March 2002, raised the federal MPG standard for new vehicles by one-third and dropped the loopholes that allow SUVs and pickups to meet lower standards than regular cars or to avoid standards entirely. Democrats from auto-making states were unhappy because, regardless of whether Detroit made a mistake in emphasizing the mammoth-vehicle market, that's the decision Detroit made, leaving new mileage rules unpopular

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in the Midwest. After a Senate showdown, the Kerry-McCain mileage plan lost 62–38, with 19 Democrats voting against it.

The Kerry-McCain proposal raised mileage using the existing "corporate average fuel economy" (CAFE) system, which in theory requires the total number of vehicles a manufacturer sells to have a target MPG average. Economists dislike that system, and some believe it contains perverse incentives that harmed Midwest auto production. As a Massachusetts senator, Kerry didn't need to care about Midwest auto production. As a presidential candidate, he must: Thus, his new energy policy drops CAFE and instead offers tax credits of up to $5,000 to anyone who buys a fuel-efficient vehicle, plus $10 billion to the Big Three to help them retool factories for production of high-MPG cars and trucks.

This new plan is less definite. Whereas Kerry once favored strong, binding MPG restrictions, he has now backtracked to an incentive-based system that may or may not work. Kerry's plan would make fuel-efficient vehicles cheaper than guzzlers and then let the market decide. But it's not implausible that consumers would be attracted to vehicles that cost $5,000 less and burn less gasoline—and therefore that Kerry's system could inspire a market shift toward higher MPG. A simple one-third increase in the mileage of new vehicles would have a remarkably beneficial impact on the United States–Persian Gulf relationship, and quickly.

Here's the math. About 17 million new cars and "light trucks" (SUVs, pickups, and minivans) are sold in the United States each year and driven, on average, about 12,000 miles annually. If the fuel efficiency of 17 million vehicles driven 12,000 miles annually rose by one-third, from a real-world 17 MPG to a real-world 23 MPG, that would save about 200 gallons of gasoline annually per vehicle, or about 3.4 billion gallons of gasoline. Since a barrel of petroleum yields 20 gallons of gasoline, about 170 million barrels of oil would be saved.

Perhaps you think, Aha! With U.S. petroleum demand at 20 million barrels daily, this MPG initiative has saved just about one week's worth of oil. Yes—*in the first year*, the MPG increase would have little effect, in much the same way that, in their first year, few investments yield much return. But remember the miracle of compounding! In the second year, with two model-years' worth of vehicles at the higher MPG, 340 million barrels of oil are saved. The next year, the savings is 510 million barrels, the next year 680 million, and so on. In just the fifth year of this initiative, we would need to purchase about 850 million fewer barrels of petroleum—approximately the amount the United States imports each year from the Persian Gulf states. If future vehicle sales are about the same as current sales, it would only take seven to eight years for there to be more vehicles on the road with the new standards than without them. Then, a tipping point might be reached, and national petroleum consumption could actually start to decline. (Note to econ majors: Yes, this is a simplified calculation that does not include the effects higher MPG standards might have on auto markets.)

In short, eliminating U.S. dependence on Gulf-state oil is not a granola-crunching fantasy. All that's needed is a one-third MPG improvement, an extremely doable goal. Moreover, this goal is achievable within roughly a decade: Five years' notice to automakers to allow them to adjust plans and production (this avoids harm to Detroit), five years of sales of higher-MPG vehicles, and then the United States can kiss the Persian Gulf goodbye. When Kerry promises "a secure America independent of Middle East oil," he is not blowing smoke. He is setting a realistic goal that can be achieved in the near term.

Of course, if the United States stopped buying Middle East crude, the oil sheiks might simply sell to someone else, notably China. But then the sheiks would be China's problem. The United States would no longer need to offer its soldiers' blood in defense of Gulf oil fields, nor coddle corrupt Gulf dictatorships. In addition to improving U.S. national security, an end to purchases of Persian Gulf oil could improve economic security. If rising Chinese demand for oil causes a long-term rise in prices, to perhaps $75 per barrel, the U.S. economy may be severely damaged—unless fuel efficiency reduces our need for oil.

BUT WOULDN'T HIGHER MPG standards force people to drive econo-box death traps? No—mileage standards could rise by one-third with hardly any outward change in cars. Godzilla-class SUVs, such as the Hummer and the Excursion, would be history, but full-sized sedans and large SUVs, such as the Ford Explorer, could still grace auto showrooms.

Consider that, from 1981 to 2003, the average horsepower of new vehicles sold in the United States rose 93 percent, average acceleration time improved 29 percent, and average weight rose 24 percent, while average MPG remained essentially unchanged. That Detroit has been able to make its products heavier, faster, and more powerful while essentially keeping mileage the same means that engine efficiency has improved significantly: It's just that improvements have gone into power, not MPG. The main changes needed for vehicles to show a big rise in MPG, yet remain full-sized and comfy, are reductions in horsepower and acceleration.

That today even family cars accelerate 29 percent faster than cars of two decades ago is a leading reason franticness has taken over U.S. roads—almost every new car has the power to drag race from stoplights and cut others off in road-rage style. Is this a beneficial development? Certainly not for young people, whose high risk of death in traffic accidents traces partly to the increase in car acceleration. Raising vehicle fuel efficiency one-third by reducing horsepower would not only allow the United States to bid Riyadh farewell, it would make U.S. roads less dangerous and rage-stressed. Everyone would be better off.

Already, there are hints the market is shifting toward improved MPG. The Hummer is having a bad sales year, while the hardest car to get—as measured by waiting time—is the 40 MPG Toyota Prius sedan, which uses a "hybrid" gasoline-electric drivetrain. But, if you're wondering

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why Toyota is not rushing to stamp out more Priuses, it's because the company loses money on every one it sells: Manufacturers have not yet learned how to build hybrids at a profit. This, in turn, is why fuel-efficiency improvements based on established technology are the key to moderating oil demand. Someday, automakers will manufacture hybrids profitably; someday, hydrogen power and other advances will be practical. But automakers and White House officials talk futuristically about hybrids and hydrogen because it indefinitely postpones MPG reforms, implying that significant increases in fuel economy are not practical now. They are.

LAST MONTH, THE California Air Resources Board mandated that, by 2016, passenger vehicles sold in California emit, on average, one-third less carbon. Since, with current technology, the only practical means to reduce greenhouse gases is to reduce fuel consumption, this was the same as ordering a one-third increase in MPG. Automakers are already complaining. They will file dilatory lawsuits and predict exorbitant costs. But automakers complained, filed dilatory lawsuits, and predicted exorbitant costs about seat belts, smog reduction, and air bags—and all turned out to be feasible and affordable. For decades, California has been the leader in automobile trends: in styles and tastes, in safety and pollution control. Now California demands a one-third improvement in fuel economy. The entire country should join this initiative.

Weaning ourselves from Gulf oil or combating the greenhouse effect only seems impossible today because we have not yet tried to face these challenges. With a wise and forward-looking energy policy, we can preserve our comfortable lifestyle and protect the climate. But nothing will happen until genuine changes in energy policy are made. Western society is living in a pleasant interregnum, during which fossil energy is cheap and artificial global warming has so far done no harm. Neither condition is likely to last. John Kerry proposes to act while there is yet time; George W. Bush proposes to leave the problems for someone else. ■

The invention of flip-flop.

Fictional Character

BY JONATHAN CHAIT

IF YOU HAVE read any of those "man on the street" newspaper stories about the election this year, you've probably read something very much like the following. It's a Baltimore *Sun* interview with Shirley Irwin of Dunbar, West Virginia:

> Irwin, a 64-year-old lifelong Democrat, says things have been "terrible" during the nearly four years that Bush has been in the White House. She's scared that he's "ruined" Medicare and would do the same to Social Security, the programs she depends on to get by. Irwin believes Bush planned to invade Iraq from the moment he took office and says he bungled the war there. But she can't bear to vote for Sen. John Kerry, whom she calls a dishonest waffler whose ideas are no better than Bush's. "I don't like Bush either, but if I've got to choose between the two, count me for Bush," Irwin said. "With Kerry, one minute he would vote for something and the next minute he would change his mind."

The image of John Kerry as a "dishonest waffler" is so powerful in some voters' minds that it overcomes disagreement with George W. Bush on nearly every issue. You would think being consistently wrong would be worse than being irresolutely correct, but apparently not. And the notion of Kerry as a flip-flopper is so deeply embedded that it has penetrated the popular culture. Jay Leno, football announcer Al Michaels, and countless others have all cracked wise about Kerry as a flip-flopper.

You have to wonder, when was the last time a party nominated a presidential candidate of such low character? Oh, yes: That would be four years ago. In 2000, Bush painted Al Gore as a flip-flopper whenever possible. Voters, he declared, "don't want flip-floppers as president of the United States." Rather than dispute Gore's positions, he derided them as incoherent. When Gore criticized privatizing Social Security, Bush's spokesman mocked it as Gore's "third position in six months." This characterization was amplified in the media. "Mr. Gore has a bit of a reputation for flip-flopping and corner-cutting on issues like abortion and trade," reported a *New York Times* news story in August 2000.

The last candidate as opportunistic and unprincipled as Gore was Bill Clinton. In 1992, George H.W. Bush's campaign ran advertisements assailing Clinton's contradictions. "As the case of military service makes most clear, these differing positions are, in fact, more than mere flip-flops. They reflect a fundamental element of Governor Clinton's character," charged Dan Quayle. Bush mocked Clinton by visiting a Waffle House. This perception of Clinton became so ingrained that even liberal *Doonesbury* cartoonist Garry Trudeau depicted Clinton as a waffle. Four years later, reported the *Times*, Bob Dole spent "weeks portraying [Clinton] as a waffler without real convictions" and ran under the not-very-subtle slogan, "The better man for a better America."

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There are two possible interpretations of this history. The first is that the Democratic Party, characterologically speaking, has had an astonishing run of bad luck. For four straight presidential elections, it has put forth nominees of such dismal personal integrity that they have been identified in the public mind largely by their prevarication and flip-floppery. This is the interpretation you'd reach if you believed the Sunday morning talking heads, the Republicans and their allied pundits, and the late-night comics.

That would make for quite a coincidence. So let us consider a second interpretation: There is nothing particularly dodgy about Kerry or the previous two Democratic nominees. Their inevitable portrayal as flip-floppers instead reflects larger structural forces in our political system that would result in almost any Democratic nominee acquiring a similar reputation. And the way we understand "character" in presidential elections tells us very little about the true character of the people who would be president.

IS THE NOTION of Kerry as a flip-flopper a pure fiction contrived by his enemies? Not exactly. Kerry has flip-flopped on issues (as have Gore and Clinton), because flip-flopping, like kissing babies and raising money, is one of the things that politicians do. But defining flip-flopping as the essence of Kerry's nature is ridiculous.

Bush's campaign provides a list of 37 Kerry flip-flops. Of these, six appear to be legitimate reversals. Some of them clearly reflect an attempt to abandon a politically unpopular stance. Kerry opposed capital punishment for terrorists and favored higher gasoline prices, but he later reversed himself on both issues. In 1992, he criticized affirmative action as "limited and divisive" but did not entirely reject it—before later embracing it without qualification. Like almost every presidential hopeful, he went from con to pro on ethanol subsidies. In all these cases, there's no plausible explanation for Kerry's change of heart other than political expediency.

On two other reversals, Kerry could at least credibly argue that he reversed positions due to changing circumstances. In 1993, he expressed doubt about how well the Federal Employees Health Benefits System worked. Today, he has made it a model for his health care plan. Kerry also opposed making companies count stock options as an expense before abandoning that position after the corporate scandals of 2002. In the former case, Kerry probably learned more about the issue at hand, having never had to draft a national health care plan previously. In the latter, Enron made Kerry's anti-expensing position look substantively stupid at the very same time it made it politically stupid. Whether Kerry was bowing to reason or to expediency is anybody's guess.

Republicans also count as flip-flops cases where Kerry emphasized different aspects of his position at different times. In 2000, Kerry called for a reevaluation of the Cuban embargo. Asked last year if he'd lift the embargo, Kerry replied, "Not unilaterally, not now, no." A few months after that, he explained that he favored some travel or cultural exchanges but not "opening up the embargo willy nilly." Last year, Kerry appeared before an Arab American group and criticized Israel's security fence for encroaching too far into Palestinian territory. A few months later, he defended the fence as a "legitimate act of self-defense." Kerry's position was internally consistent—he approved of the fence but not where it was being built—but he obviously went out of his way to give different impressions to different audiences.

The most well-known instance of this subtle shading is Kerry's position on Iraq. But, here as well, Kerry never altered his underlying stance. He favored a tightened inspections regime and recognized that only the threat of unilateral U.S. action embodied by congressional authorization for war would spur the United Nations to act. He subsequently opposed the way Bush used that authority. Bush now says that, by endorsing a use-of-force resolution, Kerry "voted for the war." At the time, though, Bush sold the resolution in exactly the way Kerry saw it. "If you want to keep the peace," Bush argued in 2002, "you've got to have the authorization to use force."

The rest of the Bush campaign's list of supposed Kerry flip-flops is simply phony. He voted for the No Child Left Behind Act but castigated Bush for failing to deliver the promised funds. He voted to develop missile defenses but opposed deploying them immediately on the grounds that they didn't work yet. He voted for a bill to spend $87 billion on fighting and rebuilding in Iraq and to pay for it by repealing upper-bracket tax cuts, but he voted against a bill to spend the same money financed by borrowing. (Thus his famous explanation, "I actually voted for the $87 billion before I voted against it.") And so on. Republicans ridicule Kerry for his "reversals," but, in these examples and others, there was a clear difference between what Kerry supported and what he opposed.

Does this record make Kerry a person of unusually weak convictions, or a normal politician? You can't answer that with mathematical precision, but it is enlightening to compare his flip-flops to those of noted Man of Principle George W. Bush. The liberal Center for American Progress has compiled a list of what it calls 30 Bush flip-flops. Of these, 13 are indisputable reversals. For instance, when running for Congress in 1978, Bush favored abortion rights, then later he flipped. He opposed the McCain-Feingold Act but later signed it. Bush insisted on holding a final vote on going to war at the U.N. Security Council in early 2003—"No matter what the whip count is, we're calling for the vote"—but dropped plans to do so. Bush opposed the creation of a Department of Homeland Security before embracing the idea. He did the same on creating an outside commission to investigate WMD intelligence failures. In turn, he opposed creating the 9/11 Commission, opposed allowing it a time extension to finish its work, opposed allowing Condoleezza Rice to testify, and insisted on limiting his testimony to one hour before eventually abandoning each impediment.

You could debate which man has flip-flopped more. But one thing is clear: If a stranger unfamiliar with the campaign examined the two men's records, he would never

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conclude that Kerry is a serial flip-flopper and Bush is the embodiment of consistency.

IF WE WANT to understand why Kerry is so widely seen as an untrustworthy flip-flopper, we must look beyond anything intrinsic to his character and consider deeper trends that result in every Democratic nominee being perceived the same way. If there was a single factor setting these tectonic shifts into motion, it was the rise of Bill Clinton.

Clinton, of course, had certain qualities—rumored (and later confirmed) infidelity and a less-than-heroic circumvention of the draft—that made him an inviting target for character attacks. But his political reinvention of the Democratic Party mattered more in the long run. In the 20 years before Clinton won the Democratic nomination, Republicans enjoyed plenty of ideological ammunition for their campaigns—mainly defense, crime, welfare, and middle-class taxes. But, with the end of the cold war, defense lost its political salience. And, when Clinton embraced the death penalty, welfare reform, and middle-class tax cuts, suddenly the issues the GOP had used to pulverize generations of hapless Democrats were off the table. Republicans, saddled with unpopular stances of their own (on issues like health care, education, and the environment), suddenly had little choice but to run on character.

Just consider one of Bush's favorite lines, which he used in his acceptance speech and repeated on the stump: "Even when we don't agree," he says, "at least you know what I believe and where I stand." It's an explicit attempt to persuade voters not that they support Bush's program but that they ought to support him regardless, based on his personality.

For a time, after September 11, 2001, it appeared Republicans would enjoy the same advantage on foreign policy that they held during the last two decades of the cold war. Iraq gave the Republicans an issue on which they could take a more hawkish and more popular stance than most Democrats. But the unraveling of the occupation neutralized this brief advantage from a policy perspective. Indeed, Bush spends much of his energy on Iraq, arguing that Kerry's position is no different from his own. "My opponent looked at the same intelligence I looked at," Bush said at a rally last week. "He concluded that Saddam Hussein was a serious threat. He voted 'yes' when it came to the authorization of force. He may not want to admit it today."

As Peter Beinart argued in these pages three weeks ago ("Character Acting," September 17), Bush has turned the war on terrorism into a character issue. Bush may have an advantage on handling terrorism, but this derives from the character traits he seeks to project—his image of resolution and strength—not from any programmatic approach to fighting Al Qaeda. Kerry veered to Bush's right on using ground troops in Tora Bora and funding homeland security. Bush, of course, claims that his Iraq policy struck a blow against terrorism, but the public has not embraced that argument. An early September Harris poll found that just 43 percent of Americans thought the Iraq invasion strengthened the war on terrorism, versus 41 percent who thought it weakened it and 16 percent who were unsure.

You can see a similar dynamic on many domestic policy issues. For instance, polls show that respondents overwhelmingly prefer Kerry's plan to repeal the Bush tax cuts that benefit only those making more than $200,000 per year. But polls also show that Bush has a modest advantage on taxes overall. He has achieved this advantage by convincing voters that Kerry can't be trusted to carry out his (more appealing) platform. In Bush's stump speech, he often says, "So they said, 'How are you going to pay for it?' [Kerry] said, 'That's easy, we're going to tax the rich.' You've heard that before, haven't you?"

The alleged character flaws of whomever the Democrats nominate for president change from election to election. But the charge of flip-flopping always plays a central role for a very important reason: It's the natural parry to the Democrats' post-Clinton centrism. The moderation that has characterized the Democratic Party since Clinton has the natural advantage of avoiding unpopular stances. It also has two disadvantages. First, as the party has shifted right, it has forced Democrats in its mainstream to shift along with it. (Hence Kerry's flip-flop on the death penalty.)

Second, New Democrat–style centrism saddles its adherents with positions that straddle the political divide. Kerry supported developing missile defense but not deploying it immediately; he supported NAFTA, which had labor and environmental provisions, but opposed a trade bill that did not. When your position on many issues is "neither too much nor too little," you can appear inconsistent even if you're not. Sure, it doesn't help that Kerry has trouble explaining himself. But even a gifted communicator like Clinton, remember, was widely seen as a waffler.

IN THEIR ELEVATION of character over policy, Republicans have found a powerful, though unwitting, ally in the mainstream news media. One of the curiosities of political journalism is that reporters tend to be assiduously even-handed about matters of policy (which can revolve around disputes over objective fact) but ruthlessly judgmental on questions of character (which are inherently subjective). In fact, most reporters don't know or care much about policy. They see politics primarily through the lens of the candidates' personal traits. Journalism fixture Jack Germond gives voice to this ethos when he writes, in *Fat Man Fed Up*, "[T]he only hope for better politics lies in the possibility of better people who can command the public's attention and win on the force of their personalities and the quality of their service."

Political reporters—outside of partisan outlets like the Murdoch media—do not intend any partisan bias in their character judgments. Historically, the process has been brutally unfair but essentially random, and therefore nonpartisan. Reporters and pundits seize upon isolated and generally meaningless incidents. In 1972, Democratic hope-

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ful Ed Muskie appeared to shed a tear as he defended his wife. In 1992, Dan Quayle read the word "potatoe" from a misspelled cue card. In a 1992 debate, George H.W. Bush checked his watch for his response time. These incidents became proof that Muskie was too weak, Quayle too stupid, and Bush too aloof to be president. The character traits "revealed" by these anecdotes, once rendered and self-fulfillingly repeated, proved impossible to dislodge.

In recent years, however, Republicans have figured out that this process doesn't have to be random. You don't have to wait for the news media to seize upon some incident as emblematic of your opponent's character flaw. You can prime the pump yourself. The model for this kind of campaign began when Republicans set out to discredit presumptive Democratic nominee Al Gore. "After years of battling with President Clinton, House Republicans are shifting their sights to Vice President Al Gore and using ridicule as their weapon of choice," reported *The New York Times* in May 1999. This entailed a "clearinghouse of anti-Gore press releases and activity, with [Texas Representative Dick] Armey mocking Mr. Gore over his pronouncements on air travel, the Internet and traffic congestion. ... In essence, they are trying to do to him what Democrats tried to do to former Vice President Dan Quayle: make him the foil for comedians on late-night television."

Republicans, at this point, are far more advanced than Democrats in circulating the kinds of damaging anecdotes that political reporters will repeat, and that can make the leap into the popular culture. First, they have a more sophisticated understanding of how narratives about candidates are established and how to play into them. Second, they have access to a partisan media network that Democrats are only in the formative stages of reproducing.

To get a sense of how this process works, consider one typical incident. On August 11, 2003, Kerry visited a famous Philadelphia cheesesteak stand. But, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported the next day, he eschewed the local custom of topping the sandwich with Cheez Whiz, instead requesting Swiss cheese. This fit perfectly with the portrait of Kerry as estranged from working-class habits. (Republicans had been whispering to reporters for months that Kerry "looks French." Switzerland was close enough.) "Massachusetts Democratic Senator and presidential candidate John Kerry, who's often needled by conservatives who say he looks and acts French, made, as you can see there, the obligatory stop in Philadelphia yesterday at the famous Pat's King of Steaks," intoned Fox News anchor Brit Hume later that day. "The distinguished senator ordered a cheesesteak with Swiss cheese. Told that Swiss cheese was unavailable, the senator settled for Cheez Whiz, which, like the cheesesteak, is a uniquely American concoction."

The story quickly spread. "For Kerry, a Boston Brahmin, [the cheesesteak incident] is something of a sore spot," reported *The Washington Post* the following day. "As he seeks to lose his reputation for $75 Salon Christophe haircuts, Turnbull & Asser shirts and long fingernails to play classical guitar, he has been seen riding a motorcycle and doing other regular-guy things." That same day, MSNBC pundit Mike Barnicle, CNN pundit Tucker Carlson, *The Boston Globe* gossip column, and CNN political reporter John King all retold the tale of Kerry and the cheesesteak. Since then, it has been repeated in the media more than 100 times. Earlier this year, Bush declared in Philadelphia (using the local lingo), "I like my cheesesteak Whiz with," spurring the media to once again revisit Kerry's cheesesteak gaffe.

THIS IS NOT to say Kerry is some sort of natural plebeian. Of course he's not. The point is that unflattering characterizations of Kerry and other Democrats tend to find far wider circulation than equally unflattering characterizations of Bush. Compare the cheesesteak episode with a close Bush equivalent. In November 2000, *Newsweek* reported:

> Aboard Bush's plane, [John] McCain's chief strategist, John Weaver, had—without thinking—pulled a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich off the snack cart and eaten it. Bush came aboard the plane and asked the flight attendant for his PB&J. She had to tell him it was gone. "It's gone?" Bush said, disbelieving and suddenly angry. "Who ate my peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich?" After a minute Weaver impishly raised his hand. "I did," he said. "Fine," said Bush. "Don't eat any more of his food," McCain cracked, sotto voce. A few people chuckled, and Bush returned to his seat to pout.

By the prevailing standards of the media, this episode is every bit as newsworthy as the cheesesteak episode. It reflects aspects of what Bush's critics regard as his character flaws—peevishness, immaturity, a sense of entitlement. But this particular sandwich encounter was never picked up by other news organizations.

One reason stories about Bush's elitism don't receive the same attention as stories about Kerry's elitism is that the model for the latter is far better entrenched. This simply reflects one of the most tiresome habits of the political media. Once a narrative template has been established, nearly any fact can be wedged into it. We "know," for instance, that Kerry is a flip-flopper. So, when one of his staffers leaked in May that Kerry might forego formally accepting the Democratic nomination until September—so as to counteract a legal loophole that would otherwise let Bush outspend him—that fact, too, was wedged into the template. "John Kerry's idea of rigging his nomination for financial gain looks too clever by half—especially for a politician with a troublesome reputation for trying to have it both ways," wrote *Wall Street Journal* reporter John Harwood.

This is one of those reportorial pronouncements comically lacking in self-awareness. In Harwood's defense, the statement is literally true. Kerry does, after all, have a troublesome reputation for trying to have it both ways. That he has that reputation, though, tells us far less about Kerry than it does about the sorry way we go about choosing presidents. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Compassions

DURING HIS LIFETIME CHE Guevara seemed to many a somewhat romantic figure, and a new film about him, which deals only with his early days, emphasizes the romance. **THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES,** directed by Walter Salles, the Brazilian who made *Central Station*, has a screenplay by José Rivera based on Guevara's journals and those of his friend Alberto Granado. Those journals record the travels of the two men from Buenos Aires through South America in 1952. Guevara was twenty-three, the son of relatively affluent parents, and within one semester of earning a medical degree. (Throughout he is called Fuser, but this nickname is never explained.) Granado, thirty, was already an established biochemist. Yet it was the older man who proposed the trip and urged Guevara to come along. The purpose was double: to see the continent and to have a relatively free fling before both of them settled down as they thought they would. They didn't, as it turned out, or at least not as they expected; and this trip was the chief reason.

THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES
(Focus)

MOOLAADÉ
(New Yorker)

The pair set out on a cranky old motorcycle, heading north from Buenos Aires, planning to travel through Argentina to Chile and Peru and Venezuela. They completed their plan, but early in the journey their motorcycle collapsed, and they hitchhiked from then on. Naturally they encountered attractive women along the way. But, more lastingly impressive, they encountered a great deal of human suffering, injustice, oppression. Quite apart from social troubles, they even spent a few weeks helping out in a Peruvian leper colony.

Guevara, though he returned home to get his medical degree, was a changed man. Granado—in the film—was not similarly affected. (Though, as the film does not tell us, he had already been politically eruptive. In 1943 he was jailed for a year because of anti-Peronist protests.) It was then that Guevara became intensely political, and joined up with Castro, who was in Mexico. When Castro returned to Cuba, Che went along with him, first as a doctor with the Castro forces, then as a military commander. Finally he became a prominent figure in the new regime. None of these matters is in the film, which ends with the newly altered Guevara's dreamy views of a better future.

Even as given, one may puzzle over some aspects of the story. How could an intelligent young man have been unaware, as Che is shown to be here, of the troubling conditions that he found in his country? (In fact, again not in the film, three years earlier he had explored northern Argentina on a bicycle, and subsequently worked as a deckhand on a ship that visited Panama, Honduras, and Haiti, so presumably he had seen something of the inequities that stirred him a few years later.) But Salles was out to re-create a secular Saul on the road to a Marxist Damascus, so he concentrated on the 1952 conversion. And he has done that job engrossingly.

The two actors who play Guevara and Granado are excellent. Gael García Bernal is immediately attractive as the thoughtful and responsive Che; Rodrigo de la Serna, as Granado, rollicks right off the screen to embrace us with his energy and earthiness. (The real Granado, who still survives, advised Salles on the film and is glimpsed at the end.) What could be more gratifying than a story of the hijinks of two intelligent young men, especially if the story has a grave and humane conclusion?

A closing note sketches Che's subsequent career in Cuba and the Congo and Bolivia, and adds that he was killed in Bolivia in 1967 with the help of the CIA. The note gives no account of the Castro regime in which Che was involved nor of the changes in the tenor of his later political life. The idealistic young visionary became committed to revolutionary violence, a tough and ruthless guerrilla leader. (The only mention of communism in the film comes from a couple whom the young men meet along the road, who have lost their home because of their beliefs.) *The Motorcycle Diaries* is nothing like a full picture of Che—nor of Granado and his eventual scientific career in Cuba, for that matter. But it exhilarates with the spirit of these young men in Act One of their lives.

The Senegalese novelist and director Ousmane Sembène, now eighty-one, presents **MOOLAADÉ.** Sembène's age is only one of the facts that lead to the wonderment of the film. As with some other films from out-of-the-way places, it leaves us curious about how it got made in a small sub-Saharan village. Technicians can be brought along, but where did the director find the people who could do the acting that he needed? These performances are hardly complex, but even their ease needed to be *acted*. In this film the villagers—some of them, anyway—have televisions and thus presumably have seen acting. Still, Sembène must have an inductive touch with people to introduce them to the very idea of doing some acting themselves and then to help them to achieve it.

Sembène wrote the screenplay, which is an attack on the practice of female genital mutilation that still goes on in Africa. The story is simple, necessarily so. In this village, in an unspecified country, one woman stands out against the mutilation practice. The sacerdotal corps of women who perform the mutilating then threatens her, as do some of the men who refuse to marry girls who were not mutilated when they were young. The rebellious woman holds her ground. During the struggle, one young girl dies of the mutilation. The rebellious woman

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gains support.

The photography by Dominique Gentil is pleasantly surprising, as it often is in African films. The textiles of these people's clothes are beautiful: color is obviously a relevant factor in their lives. Some of the mud structures that we see are painted pink. Sembène has moved his camera and his people in patterns that emphasize the starkness of the story. In large measure the picture's gravity comes from the unpretentious fact of its existence.

Sembène has never been as stirring a director as, to name another African, Idrissa Ouedraogo of Burkina Faso, whose best work has almost Athenian stature. But Sembène's love of his people and his commitment to the richness that underlies the poverty of their condition have always made his films gems of truth, as they do once again here. ■

Albert Murray

Jazz: Notes Toward a Definition

I.

JAZZ MUSIC, AS IS ALSO THE CASE with the old down-home spirituals, gospel and jubilee songs, jumps, shouts and moans, is essentially an American vernacular or idiomatic modification of musical conventions imported from Europe, beginning back during the time of the early settlers of the original colonies.

Specifically, jazz as such began as a secular dance music that evolved from ragtime piano music, brass-band music, and the guitar, vocal, harmonica, barroom, honky-tonk, and juke-joint music called the blues, which generates an atmosphere of groovy delight and festive well-being in the very process of recounting a tale of woe. As any church member will testify, generating a Dionysian atmosphere is precisely what honky-tonks, juke joints, barrooms, and gin mills are all about.

In any case, the jazz musician's blues should not be confused with the torch singer's lament, which is a matter of wearing one's heart on one's sleeve because one has loved unwisely and not well and has become not the one and only, but the lonely, "ain't these tears in these eyes telling you." In this sense, Billie Holiday's famous recording "Strange Fruit" is not blues music. It is a political torch song, a lament about unrequited patriotic love. We have loved and fought and died for this country for all these many years, the song asserts, because it has been our official homeland for this many generations, and now just look at what some of these other folks think they have a right to do to somebody because they want to think that they are better than them.

Actually, "Strange Fruit" is not even written in any of the established blues stanzas. "The St. Louis Blues," by contrast, is also about unrequited love, but it is written in the most widely used blues form, the twelve-bar blues chorus. And what it inspires, whether in up-tempo or in slow drag, regardless of the words, is not regret and despair, but elegance and good-time movement. (For a jazz musician's inflection of a famous torch song, listen to Roy Eldridge's rendition of "After You've Gone" of 1937, and also the Jazz at the Philharmonic version of 1946, featuring Mel Powell, Charlie Parker, Howard McGee, Lester Young, and others.)

Ironically, as little as it has been noticed, it is the pale-skinned or so-called white European, not the dark-skinned Africans, the brown-skinned inhabitants of the Middle East, the so-called yellow skinned Asians, or the so-called red-skinned people of the Americas, and so on, who describe their moods in terms of changes of the color of their skin (mainly of their faces!), which have traditionally been described as becoming red with embarrassment, green with envy, gray with concern, dullness, or "the blahs" of

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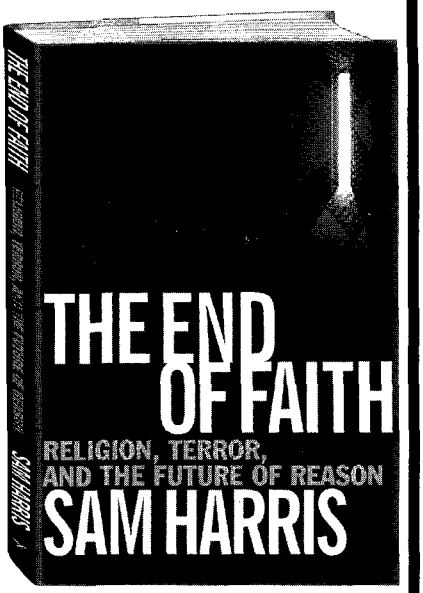

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boredom, and blue with sorrow and self-pity. Hence, the blue devils of torment or torment by blue demons, as in the case of delirium tremens. (Blue skies are another matter altogether.)

There was a time between the 1890s and the early 1920s when ragging a tune and jazzing a tune added up to just about the same kind of musical statement. Did the word "jazz" win out because "jazzing" sounded more Dionysian than "ragging"? After all, legendary accounts of early jazz in New Orleans place great emphasis on its connection with the red-light district of Storyville. According to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, jazz is "a Creole word meaning to speed up, applied to syncopated music, of American Negro, and probably of African origin; a type of American music, characterized by melodious themes, subtly syncopated rhythms, and varied orchestral coloring."

But neither the earthy ambivalence of the blues nor the elegant syncopation of ragtime is indigenous to New Orleans. It was in Memphis that W. C. Handy, who was from Alabama, codified and put the old down-home blues stanza (which he first heard in Mississippi) into the public domain of American popular music, as Scott Joplin from Texas had done for ragtime in Sedalia, Missouri a few years earlier. Perhaps the most obvious—if not the most definitive—characteristic of early New Orleans jazz was its special emphasis on polyphony and improvisation, though it was Kansas City jazz that was to become known and celebrated for the subtle syncopation of its swinging 4/4 stomps, jumps, and shouts.

Even so, there was a small group in New Orleans in 1908 that was sometimes known as the original Creole Jass Band. Also King Oliver, after moving to Chicago following the closing of Storyville, once led a group called the Original Creole Jazz Band, and at another time he led one called the Dixie Syncopators. Most ballroom or dance-hall bands outside of New Orleans continued to bill themselves as "syncopated orchestras" until the early 1920s. By the mid-1930s, they were advertised as swing bands as well as jazz bands. But by then jazz had become the generic term for an American secular dance music with its own style, variations, and repertory.

Ulysses
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II.

A JAZZ TUNE, MELODY, OR COMposition is usually based on either a traditional twelve-bar, eight-bar, or four-bar blues chorus or on the thirty-two-bar chorus of the American popular song. In either case, the overall structure is a series of choruses, which may be preceded by an improvised vamp instead of a conventional prelude or overture, and it is climaxed with an out-chorus that may or may not be followed by a coda, the jazz term for which is a tag.

Duke Ellington's "Koko" is in effect a blues-obbligato minus the original twelve-bar melody. "Moten Swing" by Count Basie and Eddie Durham for Benny Moten's Kansas City Orchestra is in effect an obbligato minus the thirty-two-bar chorus of the original melody of the pop song "You're Driving Me Crazy." Thelonius Monk's obbligato treatment of "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone" became "Four in One," his version of "Sweet Georgia Brown" became "Bright Mississippi," and "Straighten Up and Fly Right" became "Epistrophe." Thus did Charlie Parker's recording of "Ornithology" come from "How High the Moon," and Dizzy Gillespie's "Groovin' High" from "Whispering." And so on it goes, with the jazz musician treating even the most sophisticated popular standards as if they were folk ditties.

The improvisational nature of jazz musicianship is such that a truly competent performer must be prepared to function as an on-the-spot composer who is expected to contribute to the orchestration in progress, not simply to execute the score as it is written and rehearsed. In fact, the "score" or lead sheet may often turn out to be "dictated" verbally or instrumentally rather than written. There is much to suggest that it is this special aspect of jazz musicianship as it is exercised, developed, and refined in informal jam sessions that accounts for the rapid rate at which jazz (which was perhaps never really a folk art!) moved from the level of a popular art around the beginning of the twentieth century to the precision and the sophistication of a fine art by the mid-1930s. Nor should the matter of aesthetic refinement and existential depth be confused with social status: it is the innovating artist, regardless of his or her formal training and certification, who actually creates that which the so-called critical establishment evaluates and values after the fact.

III.

THE DANCE-ORIENTED PERCUSsive emphasis of jazz was derived from West Africa along with the various tribal natives imported during the years of the North Atlantic slave trade, although very little African music as such continued to be performed by them in North America. Not only were ancestral African rituals generally forbidden, but also, as a rule, the local slave population was almost always so diverse in language and in tribal culture that the erstwhile Africans could not communicate with one another in their native tongues anyway. Moreover, they were inevitably more preoccupied with practical techniques of coping and surviving on harsh local terms than with preserving procedures, relics, and talismans from their past environments, however sentimental they may have been.

In any case, there are grounds to believe that the definitive percussive emphasis in jazz is owed finally to trains—that it is more a matter of an aesthetic involvement with American railroad locomotive onomatopoeia than with transmitting tribal messages. Messages to whom? About what? After all, slave owners were always on the alert and were notoriously pre-emptive about Africans' talking drums. But it is the locomotive onomatopoeia that is so characteristic of down-home guitar, harmonica, and honky-tonk piano folk blues: its employment as an elementary local color or atmospheric device should be obvious as soon as you listen seriously to the music.

Trains, train whistles, and train bells came to suggest all kinds of possibilities and aspirations. There were the metaphysical trains in the sermons and songs of the Christian church, which incidentally the captive West Africans seem to have embraced with fervent enthusiasm largely on their own. There were the metaphorical trains of the underground railroad escape routes from bondage to freedom, the likes of which existed nowhere other than America. And there were also those actual north-to-freedom

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locomotives running on railroad tracks that captive West Africans had been used to help lay and maintain, inventing section-gang spike driving and track alignment rhythms and chants even as other slave workers invented field chants, woodsman's calls, swamp hollers, and so on. Moreover, it is not very likely that any creatures anywhere in West Africa were more impressive than these man-made, man-controlled mechanical creatures that also had voices, personalities, and even names and numbers.

Incidentally, in many instances, especially in down-home folk blues, the syncopating locomotive onomatopoeia is very literal, and the music (that is, the sonority) as such as well as the rhythm and the beat is in effect as programmatic as it is in Honegger's "Pacific 231" or Duke Ellington's "Track 360," or as in such novelty popular features as "Alabama Bound," "California, Here I Come," and "Chattanooga Choo Choo," all of which employ programmatic devices in much the same way as say, Prokofiev, did in *Peter and the Wolf*.

But time passes, and over the years the refinement of locomotive onomatopoeia as a definitive device of jazz sonority as well as rhythm has been such that the locomotive elements now function in the way that dead metaphors function in conventional discourse. In Ellington's "Harlem Air Shaft," the blues locomotive sounds are still there, but now they represent a storyland panorama of people in a given area of a great metropolis. The locomotive onomatopoeia is also still there in Ellington's "Mainstem," but there it evokes the sights, the tempo, and the sounds of Broadway, including the special glitter of midtown Manhattan and Times Square. A very popular early "swing era" example of Ellington's programmatic use of locomotive onomatopoeia is his rendition of the old ragtime showcase novelty tune "Tiger Rag as Daybreak Express."

Fletcher Henderson's arrangement of "Shanghai Shuffle," by contrast, and his orchestra's recording of Benny Carter's arrangement of "Limehouse Blues," are excellent examples of musical dead metaphors. The syncopation is definitive, but it is no longer about locomotives as such. It is about a dance tempo. But then there is Ellington's three-part "UWis Suite," written near the end of his life, as a tribute to the University of Wisconsin while the band was in residence on campus. The first part is an instrumental prom chant of deluxe-hotel-ballroom-type music that goes nicely with fraternity and sorority functions, groovy and up-tempo plus off-beat by turns. The second part is a tongue-in-cheek polka to charm the Midwesterners and the outsiders alike. And then comes the third part, which at first sounds for all the world like an old down-home juke joint bump-and-grind stomp, but turns out to be "Loco Madi," a fine onomatopoeic account of the band's train trip—from, say, Chicago up to Madison and the University of Wisconsin. Incidentally, in this instance the locomotive onomatopoeia is somewhat less obviously programmatic than in its use in the "Happy Go Lucky Local" section of Ellington's "Deep South Suite," where, as in "Daybreak Express," the train itself is the subject. Here it suggests how the composer feels about his destination, the happiness with which he anticipates his arrival.

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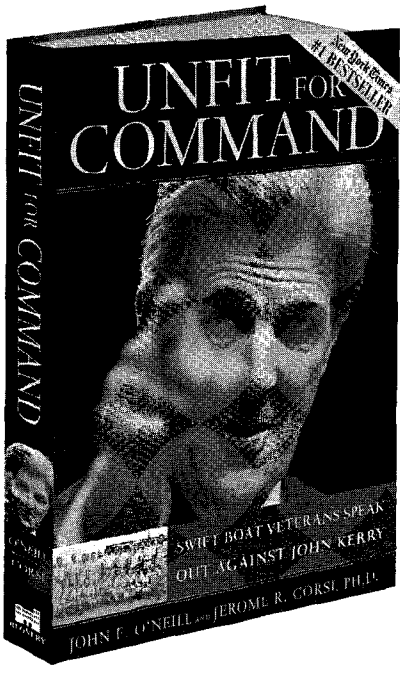

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Whether it is a dead metaphor or a thematic program, the syncopating locomotive onomatopoeia is precisely what provides the velocity of celebration that drives the jubilee songs, shouts, jumps, and ever so elegant stomps and grinds, shakes and shimmies and wobbles, on festive occasions. There is also reason to believe that locomotive onomatopoeia may be the most direct source of that definitive emphasis on syncopation that distinguishes jazz percussion from the West African percussion from which it was derived, and also from the Afro-Caribbean percussion to which it is so closely related.

The juke joint, the honky tonk, and the ballroom also represent one more thing, anthropologically speaking: a ceremonial context for the male-with-female-duet dance flirtation and embrace, upon which the zoological survival of the human species has always been predicated. The Latin American influence on this aspect of jazz as dance music is quite obvious. (The African dancing most familiar to Americans tends to be ensemble or choral dancing that suggests military preparation for aggression or defense.)

Although jazz music for such dancing is generally regarded as secular, neither the music nor the dance movements (which may be ceremonial re-enactments of primordial purification and fertility rituals) is totally forbidden at religious feast day celebrations. They are excluded from church ceremonies as such, but not from such sacred but extramural church-based celebrations as public Christmas and Easter season dances and post-church wedding receptions. And the relationship of male-female duet dances to rituals of season changes and of planting, cultivation, harvesting, storing, and preserving should not require elaboration.

Jazz music has come to be internationally recognized as something like the musical equivalent of Constance Rourke's idea of American humor: an emblem for a pioneer people who require resilience as a prime trait. Jazz is also the musical equivalent of what Kenneth Burke called representative anecdotes. By its very nature, jazz typifies the national dynamics or natural history of exploration, discovery, and improvisation; and the ever so tentative settlement of what might become a great metropolis, a pit stop, or a ghost town of lost chords. As the musical equivalent of representative anecdotes, not only do jazz performances make people around the globe feel that they know what the texture of life in the United States is like, they also make a significant number of those people want to become American. (I wonder how many immigrants to America the performances of Louis Armstrong were responsible for.) So let the trail blaze on and on, and the riffs, too, those elegantly improvised tidbits that inevitably turn back into solo opportunities! ■

James Wood
The Spoils

AUTHOR, AUTHOR
By David Lodge
(Viking, 390 pp., $24.95)

I.

"THE BIG BOW-WOW strain" was Walter Scott's rather self-deprecating phrase for his own historical fiction. Remarkably enough, the historical novel since Scott has continued barking. No longer the confident mastiff of the nineteenth century, it now risks a toy-like irrelevance. As historical change speeds up and the present presses down ever more insistently, a retrospect of a hundred years—a mere bagatelle to Scott or Balzac or Manzoni—now seems an unbridgeable abyss. The difficulty in penetrating the past has less to do with inanimate objects than with animate subjects. Henry James, who was decidedly averse to historical fiction, complained of this shortcoming in a celebrated letter to Sarah Orne Jewett. The really hard task, he claimed, was "the invention, the representation of the old CONSCIOUSNESS, the soul, the sense, the horizon, the vision of individuals in whose minds half the things that make ours, that make the modern world were non-existent."

Poor Henry James, then, to have found himself, this year, shocked into just such fraudulent life in two historical novels about aspects of his career. The two novelists, Colm Tóibín and David Lodge, might reply that 1890 is not alienatingly distant from 2004, so that James's request, in the same letter, for the novel to treat the "palpable present-*intimate*," is not necessarily violated: couldn't 1890 be thought of as the portal of a long twentieth century that we are still inhabiting? Fair enough, except that the consciousness these two novelists are trying to capture is not any old historical consciousness, but one of the most discriminating minds of its age. A novelist writing fiction about Henry James is like an analyst analyzing Freud: the great ancestor has bequeathed you everything you need to establish your own originality, but then by definition you cannot be original, for he has willed you the very terms of your analysis of him. You have inherited too much money from him for anything but your own expensive ruination.

Tóibín and Lodge are very different writers. Both have read James's letter to Jewett, but only Tóibín writes as if he has. Tóibín is novelistically interested in consciousness—that is, less in Henry James's actual consciousness than in the mind of the character that he has invented as "Henry James." Lodge is only conceptually interested in consciousness, and hews faithfully not to the reality of his invented character but to the historicity of the real James. Tóibín's willingness to take his novel seriously as a novel fruitfully detaches it from its historical referent; but Lodge's unwillingness to do so manacles it to mere record. Many passages in his book read like patched biography, and when an extract from the new novel was recently published in *The Guardian*, a quick-witted subeditor, taking it to be biography, returned it to the public domain: "Henry" (Lodge's possessive, preferred designation for his character) was made into "James" throughout the piece, and the newspaper subsequently apologized for tampering.

ONE OBVIOUS DIFFICULTY involved in writing a novel about Henry James is that unlike, say, Stendhal or Dostoevsky or Fielding, his immaculate style will have a way of embarrassing your fallen one. Tóibín evaded this shadow because his prose has a clean-limbed, gracious, and properly unhistorical aspect:

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it was not James, nor was meant to be. Lodge does not mean to be James either, but his prose, never more than serviceable, is clothed in clichés and cast-offs, a style so banal as to shake one's confidence in the author's right to novelize the Master. *Author, Author* begins dismayingly:

> London, December 1915. In the master bedroom (never was the estate agent's epithet more appropriate) of Flat 21, Carlyle Mansions, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, the distinguished author is dying—slowly but surely. In Flanders, less than two hundred miles away, other men are dying more quickly, more painfully, more pitifully—young men, mostly, with their lives still before them, blank pages that will never be filled.

The reader has barely survived the essentially academic (and surely anachronistic?) pun on "master bedroom" before the trashy "slowly but surely" kills all hope. (It is a phrase on a level with "cheap and cheerful" or "naughty but nice.") And then come the young soldiers "with their lives still before them," a phrase that would not be out of place in a blockbuster. David Lodge, often a fine critic, knows the importance of beginnings in novels; he has written about the first paragraph of *The Wings of the Dove*. Can he not see that he has lost the discriminating reader before his novel has gotten under way?

Alas, the style continues as it means to go on. We encounter Henry James, dictating to his secretary in Lamb House, pacing up and down the Garden Room: "he racked his brains for *le mot juste*." (It is cruel that a sentence about *le mot juste* should be violated by precisely its opposite—the cliché "he racked his brains.") George Du Maurier, we learn, had "a mop of soft wavy hair." Ah, a mop! Constance Fenimore Woolson only once "put a foot wrong" in her correspondence with James. Later she will heap praise on *The Portrait of a Lady*, and smooth "his slightly ruffled authorial wings." Edward Compton, one of the actor-managers with whom James does business, is "as bald as an egg." William James, traveling to England for the opening night of Henry's play, is described thus: "He came trailing clouds of glory himself, for his monumental *Principles of Psychology*, which had finally appeared the year before, was gathering plaudits from all over the world." (Clouds of glory and plaudits in one sentence; be thankful that the word "kudos" is not also there.) James is seen as plunging into "the unfamiliar and murky waters of the theatre," only later to have drunk "the heady wine of theatrical success." He "dashes off" a letter. James's manservant "stroked his moustache thoughtfully." Certain themes in James's work are "more grist to Fenimore's mill." And so on.

Of course, these slack, easy, inherited phrases are in themselves disappointing, bespeaking a writer for whom style is any old garment, grabbed without reflection from a closet of despair. But they have a particular gravity, they commit a special sin, when wrapped around a writer so massively attentive to cliché and formulaic idiom. It is true that James, because he was so inveterate and abundant a metaphor-mongerer, sometimes dipped into the common kitty, and delivered himself of the occasional poetic formula. (He even uses "I rack my brains" in one letter.) Lodge may well have taken "slightly ruffled authorial wings" directly from James, who was fond of such imagery.

But what is more usual is the way in which James takes the template of a standard-issue metaphor and builds a slightly different edifice on top of it. Take, for instance, the familiar image of diving into waters, whether to bring up a pearl or a fish, or just to plunge (recall Lodge's "plunge into the unfamiliar and murky waters of theatre"). James liked this imagery, and all the larger imagery of immersion and saturation (it is what excites queer theorists): "I have as yet scarce dipped into the great Basin at all ... I am interested, up to my eyes" is how he described his fascinated return to America in 1904. But he is rarely content to let metaphor alone; the great novels are root-systems of extended and overlapping metaphor—the very opposite of Lodge's shallow-rooted and thus dead metaphors.

James makes delicious variations on a watery theme. Consider only two examples. In 1890, he complains thus of William Dean Howells: "His abundance and facility are my constant wonder and envy—or rather not perhaps, envy, inasmuch as he has purchased them by throwing the whole question of form, style and composition overboard into the deep sea—from which, on my side, I am perpetually trying to fish them up." This has James's characteristic wit. Three years later he wrote of Flaubert: "His life was that of a pearl-diver, breathless in the thick element while he groped for the priceless word, and condemned to plunge again and again." This has James's characteristic poetry, at once metaphorical and musical: "the thick element" balanced, acoustically, by "the priceless word," while "priceless" rhymes with the earlier "breathless." And there are very few writers of prose who use adjective and noun as well as James: in *The Portrait of a Lady*, the light at Gardencourt falls on the dining-room paintings, which are seen as "vague squares of rich colour." How precise, paradoxically, is that "vague"! There are thousands of such instances in this greatest of all stylists in fiction.

It is not only that Lodge's prose must be judged by James's. The larger difficulty is that it is not always clear from whose point of view Lodge is writing. "Point of view," of course, was an obsession for James, because he had come to the conclusion,

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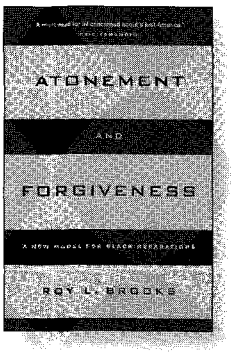

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rightly, that there is no such thing in fiction as "omniscient narration." Narration always proceeds from a particular source; there is no God-like impersonality. And there are, in brief, three sources: first, the author, or authorial voice; second, a kind of generalized chorus voice, which we might think of as the voice of the community or the neighborhood; third, one of the characters in the novel, from whose point of view we may be seeing things. Narration about a character almost always begins to fall into that character's way of seeing and saying things: this is called "free indirect style."

Tolstoy is fond of omniscient narration, but he frequently chooses to see, say, a ball or a dinner or a war from behind the eyes of a particular character. Austen, often taken to be a mistress of omniscient narration, more often writes as if inhabiting a character or a community. The famous opening of *Pride and Prejudice*, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" appears to be the purest example of omniscient narration—a universal truth, given out by the author. But the next sentence ironizes this apparent truth: "However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters." So the universal truth actually turns out to be the belief system of "a neighborhood" of "surrounding families" and perhaps not so universal after all. Is the famous opening, then, an example of omniscient narration or really an example of a community's free indirect style?

James became the greatest innovator, in the novel, of free indirect style. He began to experiment with limiting most of his narration to what could be seen or expressed by the character who was moving through. *What Maisie Knew* and *The Ambassadors* are the greatest examples of this. It was a moral question, and not merely a technical one, for James. Hewing close to a character's vision, and using the kind of words she might use herself, allowed him to immerse himself more sympathetically in a character than English novelists, in his view, had yet done. At the same time, free indirect style is a mode of irony, because the author is at once inside and outside that character—inside, because he is inflecting some of his language with his character's, and outside, because he is not inflecting all of his language in this manner. We can see what the character sees, and we can see what the character cannot see, at the same time: this is the power that *What Maisie Knew* delivers. The little girl, Maisie, can barely understand a kind of adult corruption that is palpable to the reader. James forces us to inhabit her innocence while amply displaying the corruption that surrounds her.

"Most gratifying of all was the presence of William, who had crossed the Atlantic, typically at short notice, primarily to see his ailing sister, but also to share his brother's big night. He came trailing clouds of glory himself, for his monumental *Principles of Psychology*, which had finally appeared the year before, was gathering plaudits from all over the world." Lodge's sentences here have the rhythm of free indirect style: there is a kind of first-night excitement, almost a breathlessness, so that we might imagine Henry James saying these words, either to himself, or to a friend in a letter after the event ("most gratifying was William's presence; he came at short notice, so typical of his dear self!"). We might call this a biographer's free indirect style, in which the biographer, wanting to share the excitements and the disappointments of his subject, inflects his narrative toward him. ("He was left shut up with this mystery—for ever!" writes Leon Edel of James, in his version of biographer's free indirect style.) The obvious difficulty is that the ugliness of Lodge's second sentence—"gathering plaudits"—does not sound like something Henry James would say. The first sentence takes us closer—if only in a biographical way—to him, while the second sentence brutally removes us.

And remember that Lodge is supposed to be writing a novel, not a biography, so that the second sentence jars doubly: it sounds like any second-rate chronicler of the facts. This indeed is the truth about Lodge's clichés. They are not egregious; they are just the workmanlike formulas of the mediocre biographer. (She "smoothed his slightly ruffled authorial wings.") And when Lodge splices in sentences such as this one about Edmund Gosse, how can we see a novelist as their author rather than a biographer? "Edmund Gosse, versatile man of letters, poet, critic, essayist, translator, recently retired Librarian to the House of Lords, who has known Henry James for thirty-five years, calls as arranged, a little after ten the next morning." Point of view immediately rears up at us. But from whose point of view is this written? James presumably knows Gosse's c.v.

Historical fiction—and film—always abounds, of course, in this kind of redundant self-reminding ("You know Al Alvarez, of course? The poet and critic. And pipe-smoker. And friend of Sylvia Plath"), in which characters—or the narration itself, as in Lodge—end up sounding like the mathematician mentioned by Plato, who when he counts is always encountering as if for the first time numbers he already knows very well. Fact and detail thus lose the freedom that they enjoy in non-historical fiction, becoming something closer to travel writing than to the fictive. In fiction, ideally, facts *become* necessary because they are made necessary by the free form of the story; in historical fiction, facts are *already* necessary before they enter the form, and they neither modify or are modified by that form. It is the difference between a journey and a map.

Every so often, Lodge permits himself the use of a "probably" or a "perhaps." When Henry James walks to Hampstead to see George Du Maurier, Lodge writes: "Henry, having breakfasted well, and perhaps paused on his way for some light refreshment...." He wants, I think, to admit a novelist's hesitation here, as if to allow Henry the freedom to sometimes stop for a snack and sometimes refrain from stopping. (Henry Green liked to do something similar.) Alas, in this kind of novel, the "perhaps" sounds less like a novelist's deliberate uncertainty than a biographer's ignorance covering itself.

Twenty pages later, Lodge is writing about how France seemed sexually coarse to Henry. England seems sexually buttoned-up, but on the whole Henry prefers the latter: "In the end it was probably the insistent pressure of sexual activity and sexual obsession in French literary life that had driven him from Paris and determined him to make his home in England." This, by the way, does not seem at all likely—James is made tiresomely prudish in Lodge's portrait, and never literary enough, when his mo-

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tives for living in England were in the end firmly literary; but what is interesting is that little winking word "probably." What is it doing there? Is James thinking to himself at this moment, and weighing up probabilities? ("Yes, it was probably the sex that drove me out.") Or, more likely, is Lodge admitting that, as a biographer, he has entered a speculation? The latter, surely. A novelist would know such a thing about his character; a biographer cannot. Lodge's novel is always being contaminated in this way by its confusion of genres. Ironically, the great master of point of view has been written up by Lodge in a "novel" in which point of view is always a vulgar problem.

II.

DAVID LODGE AT LEAST HAS a good story; his novelist's instincts are still sharp. He has taken the most dramatic episode—figuratively and literarily—of James's life, one expertly treated by Leon Edel in his biography. It concerns James's doomed attempts to become a successful playwright, climaxing in the disastrous opening night of his play *Guy Domville*, in January 1895, in which the distinguished author was booed by crowds of cockneys. James called it the worst night of his life, but he quickly turned to the writing of *The Spoils of Poynton*, convinced that he had learned important formal and technical lessons from his long apprenticeship as a playwright.

Lodge's James is more obsessed with fame and success than the evidence will bear. But the *Guy Domville* episode allows Lodge to make his novel a treatment of the question of modern "high" authorship. James, it is true, became resigned to being a coterie author, a writer's writer (that stretched telescope), one who was for Conrad a great model and master but who was for the great Mudie-masses utterly impenetrable, or at best the faint memory of an old popular success like *Daisy Miller*. Lodge heightens, to considerable dramatic effect, the tension of this fate, by pressing on two of James's friendships: with Constance Fenimore Woolson, who may have been in love with James, and with George Du Maurier, the amiable cartoonist of *Punch*.

Constance Fenimore Woolson, though now forgotten, was a successful writer in her time, and considerably more popular with readers than was James. Lodge reminds us that *The Portrait of a Lady* sold eight thousand copies to the forty thousand of one of Woolson's works. The Du Maurier story is even more acute. Though he was not obviously literary, Du Maurier was attractive to James, who regularly walked up from Chelsea to Du Maurier's Hampstead house for Sunday lunch *en famille* and an afternoon stroll. The two men shared ideas, and had in common their fluency in French. (James's French was diabolically good; he once amazed his friend Paul Bourget by turning, impromptu, a Kipling poem in cockney slang into its French equivalent.) One day, Du Maurier confided to James that he had in mind the writing of a novel about a young female servant girl with a wonderful voice who is mesmerized and made to sing perfectly by a Jewish magus, a Svengali. James recorded the donnée in his notebook for March 25, 1889, and toyed, as he did with many of the stories he heard, with making something out of it. But Du Maurier got there first: the book was *Trilby*, now barely read but an enormous best-seller that gave two words, Trilby and Svengali, to the language.

These are powerful ironies, and Lodge makes as much of them as he can. But they can only draw their final power, as novelistic ironies, from the reality of the character who suffers them. Without that, they are only cultural or literary or biographical ironies. Buried fathoms deep by Lodge's essentially biographical narrative, smothered in fact, it is hard for Henry James to emerge as a character who might belong to this novel rather than that biography. And when something obviously important happens to him, it occurs offstage: "They did not meet for another two years, during which Henry made two trips to America, and suffered the double blow of losing both his parents, his mother dying at the beginning of 1882, and his father in December of the same year. Meanwhile Constance roved restlessly around Italy...." For an actual novelistic character there could be no such thing as off-stage; or rather, if there were, it would become significant to us. (Why, we would ask ourselves, is this character apparently so unmoved by his parents' deaths? Why is it being written up in this way?) Only in the curious optic of biography—of compacted biography, in fact—in which some facts are briskly decided upon as more important than others, in which detail is regularly divided into foreground and background, can the death of one's parents

The Donkey

A donkey lived along that river,
penned into a brick garden, the walls
flaring like disease—chalk-pitted, snowflaked
with lichen, blooming like verdigris.

You could hear him braying
where swans brooded below the abandoned
houseboat, sunk in the cold mapled shadows
of the weir. The philosophers

trudging back and forth through their dusty stoa,
exchanging notions of moral life—
you could hear them a long way downriver, too,
the river of history, where battles are lost,

innocent children gutted, boundaries shifted
by a peace commission of bearded scoundrels
who hand over a few trunks of gold
or the head of a luckless general.

Up close the philosophers' ideas
are just shuttlecocks batted back and forth—
useful, but still feathers and a cork.
Years later, as we walked the towpath again,

the gates of the hidden garden stood open.
I don't remember if the house had fallen
into ruin—it stood alone on the common,
beneath the lane of ruptured plane trees.

There was our garden (we thought it ours),
wild with roses beside a holed water tank,
no sign a donkey had tramped its weed-stilted paddock,
except, cemented into the bricks, the iron ring.

WILLIAM LOGAN

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be a mere flick of the narrative's whip, as here.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, APART from Lodge's inability to animate his hero, his portrait seems insufficient or tonally "off" in almost every respect. Lodge banishes sexual curiosity and desire from his subject, rendering him prudish, quivering, and virginal, quite an achievement for a novelist whose very sentences seethe with erotic menace. Maupassant, representing French frankness, visits London and says to James: "I want a woman ... just an ordinary woman, as long as she has a pretty face and a nice arse." James merely blushes. But the queer theorists, though bad literary readers, are shrewd psychological ones: James's metaphors of immersion and saturation do indeed carry an erotic intensity. It is one thing to decide that James never had a sexual encounter, and quite another to decide that he never imagined one, as Lodge seems to think.

But then Lodge's James is a curiously fussy and overstuffed creature, a kind of combination of Mr. Pooter and Pooh. One can almost see him, like Milne's bear, doing his Stoutness Exercises of a morning. A key may be found in Lodge's description of James's essays: "his elegant, cosmopolitan essays appeared in the most prestigious reviews." (Again, the newsmagazine diction.) Yes, indeed, James's essays are elegant and cosmopolitan, but they are also passionate, unremittingly intense, deeply intelligent, and repetitively involved with the questions of form, language, and morality that consumed James's life. Lodge's James is closer to a Flaubertian aesthete than to the Romantic moralist—part flaneur, part Puritan—that James so supremely became.

Lodge is fond of the Flaubertian idea that monkish aestheticism may be opposed to life; that the writer will have to choose between the perfection of the life and the perfection of the work. After Constance Fenimore Woolson commits suicide, Lodge's James reflects anguishedly about these matters, fearful that he is too little moved by Constance's death, and recalling Madame Flaubert's reproach to her son: "Your mania for sentences has dried up your heart":

> Even then ... he had felt a little internal qualm of apprehension that they might one day be leveled at himself, for he shared Flaubert's mania for sentences.... Did such an obsession dry up one's heart? Was that the inevitable price one had to pay for artistic achievement? He sometimes feared that it was.... But at least he [Flaubert] had known passion. While he himself had always been ... well-conducted. It was as if Fenimore had left a message for him to find after her death, saying in effect: you have not fully lived.

I do not believe a word of this. James, while deeply respectful of Flaubert's example, returned again and again, in his essays, to its lack: a lack of real moral scrutiny. Quite the opposite of a *mot juste* hunter, James saw that aestheticism was the abiding problem in Flaubert's work, that it leached vital interest and intensity from *Sentimental Education*. Flaubert's cynicism has no counterpart in James's eternal curiosity. He upbraids Flaubert for his dread of the bourgeois: "That worthy citizen ought never to have kept a poet from dreaming." In fact, James was clearly horrified by Flaubert's religious writhing for the *mot juste*. James had a mania for sentences, all right; but he had a mania for those sentences to *refer*—which is why, in the late books, the question of what the sentences refer to is so important.

THERE IS NO FREE-FLOATING aestheticism in James. In his essay on Flaubert from 1893, he writes that there are "moments when his restless passion for form strikes us as leaving the subject out of account altogether." The subject: this was always James's quarry. Flaubert inspired a kind of dread. Flaubert was the pearl-diver who was breathless in his thick element, while James, ideally, was fishing treasure out of that same thick element. "The question of 'art' for him," writes James about Flaubert, "was so furiously the question of form, and the question of form was so intensely the question of rhythm, that from the beginning to the end of his correspondence we scarcely ever encounter a mention of any beauty but verbal beauty." So speaks the James who loved Italian and French art, who visited artists' studios in London, who loved Paris and London and Rome and New York.

Yes, New York. Reading the correspondence, and the late travel book *The American Scene* (for all its complicated engagement and recoil), one is struck by James's sheer capacity for experience. Lodge's quaking and slightly absurd figure, swaddled with servants and preciously pacing up and down for the *mot juste* in Lamb House, is a caricature belied again and again by the evidence. Lodge's James, when he buys a typewriter, reflects that it is one of the few benefits of American civilization to the world. But James was a deeper and more subtly sensitive recorder than this. He wrote in 1883, from New York, that "I never return to this wonderful city without being entertained and impressed afresh.... It is altogether an extraordinary growing, swarming, glittering, pushing, chattering, good-natured, cosmopolitan place, and perhaps in some ways the best imitation of Paris that can be found (yet with a great originality of its own)." Twenty years later, he wrote again from New York, to report on this "living and breathing and feeling and moving great monster.... It is all very interesting and almost uncannily delightful and sympathetic."

This was the James who told Edith Wharton, "Don't *conclude*! ... Live it all through, every inch of it." Not the pale withdrawer of Lodge's fantasy, but the writer who counseled Grace Norton, in one of his most moving letters: "Don't melt too much into the universe, but be as solid and dense and fixed as you can. We all live together, and those of us who love and know, live so most." Live so most: James's mania for sentences was finally a mania for living, for experience. But Lodge's plump ghost, with his Flaubertian inability to "feel," reflects on Du Maurier's death that "it was shocking ... how sooner or later we accustomed ourselves to the deaths of others, even dearly loved friends, even parents and siblings. Spouses and children might be a different matter—he couldn't be sure, never having had or lost one himself.... One should remember the dead, yes, but also let them, slowly, gently, go."

How little faith Lodge the novelist has in James the novelist: this great imaginer apparently unable to imagine what it is like to lose a child, never having had one himself! Then poor George Eliot and poor Proust and poor Jane Austen and poor Flaubert and poor Virginia Woolf and poor Chekhov and poor Christina Stead (the author of *The Man Who Loved Children*, the greatest modern novel about children), who, we can confidently assume, could not imagine

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children or their deaths, never themselves having had or lost them. Compare this shriveled James with the enlarged and enlarging James of blessed record, the man who, far from accustoming himself to the death of his siblings, in 1905 confided this memory to his notebook:

> Isn't the highest deepest note of the whole thing the never-to-be-lost memory of that evening hour at Mount Auburn—at the Cambridge Cemetery when I took my way alone—after much waiting for the favouring hour—to that unspeakable group of graves. It was late, in November; the trees all bare, the dusk to fall early, the air all still (at Cambridge, in general, *so* still), with the western sky more and more turning to that terrible, deadly, pure polar pink that shows behind American winter woods. But I can't go over this—I can only, oh, so gently, so tenderly, brush it and breathe upon it—breathe upon it and brush it. It was the moment; it was the hour, it was the blessed flood of emotion that broke out at the touch of one's sudden *vision* and carried me away.... Everything was there, everything *came*; the recognition, stillness, the strangeness, the pity and the sanctity and the terror, the breath-catching passion and the divine relief of tears. William's inspired transcript, on the exquisite little Florentine urn of Alice's ashes, William's divine gift to us, and to *her*, of the Dantean lines ... took me so at the throat by its penetrating *rightness*, that it was as if one sank down on one's knees in a kind of anguish of gratitude before something for which one had waited with a long, deep *ache*. But why do I write of the all unutterable and the all abysmal? Why does my pen not drop from my hand on approaching the infinite pity and tragedy of all the past? It does, poor helpless pen, with what it meets of the ineffable, what it meets of the cold Medusa-face of life, of all the life *lived*, on every side. *Basta, basta!*

All the life *lived*, on every side. Let it be James's eternal epitaph, and this novel's merely brief one. ■

Ruth Franklin

All That Glimmers

HEIR TO THE GLIMMERING WORLD
By Cynthia Ozick
(Houghton Mifflin, 310 pp., $24)

IN AN EPISODE OF *THE PUTTERMESSER PAPERS*, Cynthia Ozick's smorgasbord of vignettes about a highly unusual civil servant, the heroine, strolling through the Metropolitan Museum of Art, comes upon Rupert Rabeeno, a painter who produces what he terms "reënactments of the masters." Anyone else would call it copying paintings, but Rupert claims that his art is original. "I don't copy. I reënact," he insists. "Whatever I do is happening for the first time. Anything I make was never made before." Puttermesser (as she is always called), who herself yearns to repeat what she considers one of the great love affairs of history, that of George Eliot and George Lewes, is captivated. Soon the pair are happily reading aloud to each other from *Middlemarch*. But before long Rupert becomes fixated on the figure of Johnny Cross, who married Eliot after Lewes's death and seems to have modeled his own life after Lewes's. The layers of duplication are being peeled perilously thin, and soon something must tear. Cross met with disaster on his honeymoon; Rupert and Puttermesser do not make it that far.

Does art imitate life, or is it the other way around? The task of determining origins can be tricky even for a writer as richly read and genuinely reflective as Ozick. For literature itself is tainted by the inherent untrustworthiness of mimesis. Beginning with Plato's cave, it has never entirely escaped the suspicion that it is just an imitation of an imitation. If fiction is a mirror carried along the road, in Stendhal's famous analogy, that mirror is already scratched and cracked. And imitation is just a step removed from forgery. As Puttermesser discovers with regard to Rupert Rabeeno's "reënactments," there is fraudulence not only on the part of the creator who passes off a copy as the real thing, but also on the part of the receiver who accepts it as such. At the same time, those who would seek to escape the problem of appearance and reality via the simplicity of literalism should also be cautioned: they will run into their own sticky mass of paradox.

This vortex churns in the background of *Heir to the Glimmering World*, Ozick's inspired new novel. Its premise reads like a nineteenth-century novel: Rose Meadows, an orphaned young woman, answers an ad for household employment with a mysterious family by the name of Mitwisser, complete with a gaggle of unruly children, a forbidding patriarch, and a madwoman in the attic. But this is no sneaky appropriation of Dickens or Brontë; it boldfacedly announces itself as a copy, delighting in the camp of its fictional game. We learn at the start that when Rose was growing up, her father told everyone, including her, that her mother had died in childbirth, perhaps because the story "had a nineteenth-century intimation of Tragic Loss." But this is the 1920s, not the 1820s; and Rose's father turns out to have been a perverse and cruel figure who may have invented the story merely for his own self-indulgence, too solipsistic to realize that he ruins his daughter's birthday each year with his moans of "On this day, Jenny left me."

Rose's childhood takes place among the "failed farms" of upstate New York, where the landscape is larded with rundown towns by the copycat names of Troy and Carthage and Thrace. One year her father, a math teacher at the local high school, makes a deal with their housekeeper: if he gives her son an advance copy of a test, she will bake Rose a birthday cake. When the promised cake arrives, it is misshapen and decorated with "urine-yellow frosting": this is payback, because the test her father provided was last year's version. This lesson in the dangers of taking statements literally is set aside for later. For now, Rose sets her mind to making order in the chaos. "I had at the time been reading *Jane Eyre*, and admired the gravity and independence of a sad orphanhood," she reports. "My own try at gravity and independence was a way of escaping the wilderness of my father's imagination. My goal was utter straightforwardness: it made me prim and smug."

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Eventually Rose escapes to Albany to attend teachers' college, moving in with her distant cousin Bertram, with whom she promptly falls in love. But after her father's death in a car accident, she is thrown out by Bertram's girlfriend, a communist revolutionary in work shoes and men's trousers who has cast off her birth name and calls herself Ninel (Lenin spelled backwards). When Rose joins the Mitwissers, her only possession of value is a battered children's book found among her father's things that contains her mother's death certificate. It confirms what she has always suspected: her mother died of cancer when Rose was young, not in childbirth. At last, revelation comes from the pages of a book, if indirectly.

THESE GLIMPSES OF ROSE'S previous life provide a somewhat shaky frame for the story of her life with the Mitwissers, which constitutes the body of the novel. Conventionally speaking, they might be expected to give her character some depth, to allow the reader a sense of her history. Yet Rose is singularly difficult to pin down as a narrator—perhaps intentionally so. Her tone is almost affectless, her descriptions of the Mitwissers limited to bare facts and observations. Much of the family's doings are mysterious—particularly how they are supporting themselves, as they have no visible source of income—but she declines to speculate. Her only judgment is that the household is "foreign," a term that comes up again and again.

Rose's duties at first consist primarily of protecting three-year-old Waltraut, the youngest child, from her rambunctious brothers, who are sometimes called by the "funny new American names" of Hank, Jerry, and Bill, and sometimes by the "bird-chirps" of Heinz, Gert, and Willi. Anneliese, sixteen, is "hardly like a child at all; her hair was wound in braids on either side of her head, revealing tidy pink ears. In each lobe a bright dot glittered ... she looked authoritative and amazingly foreign." Elsa, the mother, is even more remote. In Rose's first encounter with her, she is talkative, her English charmingly sprinkled with German phrases; but after the family moves to New York (Professor Mitwisser plans to conduct research at the Public Library), she becomes more and more withdrawn, finally refusing to leave her upstairs bedroom, her speech unraveled into ravings. Inevitably, Rose comes to think of her as the "family madwoman"; Jane Eyre has moved to the Bronx.

The Mitwissers are people of a different book. The professor is an authority on the Karaites, a medieval Jewish sect—"a speck, a dot, a desiccated rumor, on the underside of history." He keeps Rose busy night after night in his study, typing from his dictation: her job, it eventually becomes clear, is to serve as his amanuensis, the transcriber of his thoughts. A copyist, that is; and for that she must be a cipher. It is a rare confluence of subject and method. For in contrast to the main current of Jewish tradition, which revels in intellectual give-and-take, the layering of commentary upon commentary, the Karaites, as the novel presents them, are a rebellious branch of literalists:

> Intellect engenders meaning: interpretation; commentary; parable; illumination; insight; dialogue; argument; corroboration; demurral; debate; irony; anecdote; analysis; analogy; classification; clarification. All these the Karaites repudiate as embroidery and fraudulence in the hands of their enemies (though not in their own hands).... In the ninth century they become the rabbis' foes. Scripture! they cry, Scripture alone! They will not tolerate rabbinic interpretation. They will not allow rabbinic commentary. They scorn metaphor and the poetry of inference. Only the utterance of Scripture itself is the heritage divine!

DOES INTERPRETATION, PARTICULARLY the imaginative interpretation exercised in the analysis of religion or (especially) the creation of fiction, inevitably do damage to that which it interprets? This disturbing question, which is the focus of the book's internal debate, comes to life in a figure who becomes strangely and inseparably intertwined with the Mitwissers, and whose story, told in a fairy-tale-like language distinct from the plain cadences of Rose's speech, is interwoven throughout theirs. James A'Bair is a rich playboy who has become the family's mercurial benefactor, swooping down without warning to shower them with gifts and cash before just as suddenly vanishing again, leaving them with no income until his next appearance. Another orphan, he is the heir to a fortune that derives from a series of children's books his father drew and illustrated featuring the "Bear Boy," a character based on himself as a child.

The relationship between James and his father dramatizes the parasitism that can develop between artist and muse, a parasitism made all the more malevolent by the fact that the two figures are parent and child. At first James did not mind being the center of his father's creative attention. "He stood behind his father's drawing board and saw how the watercolors, pale and magical, flooded the sinews of the drawings. He watched himself slowly bloom into being: it was himself, a furry-haired boy, posed as his father had him pose, sitting on a branch, say, or poking a stick into a puddle, or

THE MACHIAVELLIAN NEOCONSERVATIVES

Commentary

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painting a face on an onion, all those curious ideas his father had about what he liked to do." But he grows to dislike the artifice of having to wear a funny costume, and to grow his bangs until they fall into his eyes, and to allow his mother to put rouge on his knees to make them ruddy for the sketches. His entire being is devoted to his father's work: when it turns out that he needs glasses, he is "denied the relief of wearing them too often: the pale oval of the Bear Boy's small face, as innocent as an empty plate, was not to be cluttered." By the time his parents both die, while he is still a teenager, he has grown to hate the entire enterprise:

> Whatever he had been in the purity-time of his birth, whatever he was meant to become, his father had overlaid with embellishment: with lie and impurity. He did not speak in verses. The games his father devised were not his games.... Even his clothing, the blouses, the socks as high as his knees, the double-buckled shoes, the *rouge*—all a romantic imagining. Even his hair! ... He knew himself to be an appurtenance: the offspring of the impostor who animated his father's books. He was not a normal boy, he was his father's drawing, his father's discourse, his father's exegesis of a boy. His father had created a parallel boy; his father had interpreted him for the world. The Bear Boy was never himself. He was his father's commentary on his body and his brain.

Mitwisser's Karaites believe that the commentary of the rabbis annihilates the text that it interprets by equating a "clamor of contradictions" with the true word of God; the Bear Boy feels his own being annihilated in the process of its transmutation into art. Both long for purity, for first principles, for a clarity that exists pre-interpretation. If such an Eden is at least conceivable in religion, where faith allows leaps that reason will not, it can never exist for literature, which, as a mimetic art, will always be at least one step removed from its fundaments. A vision of what a more literal literature might look like is offered by Ninel, and it is not an encouraging one. In stereotypical communist fashion, she rails against Jane Austen as exemplary of the entire British Empire. "Do you realize," she asks, "how the servants in those big houses *lived*? The hours they had to put in, the paltry wages they got? Chicken-feed! And where the money to keep up those mansions *came* from? From plantations in the Caribbean run on the broken backs of Negro slaves!" She concludes that "novels, like movies, were pretend-shadows; they failed to diagnose the world as it was in reality." But Ninel, whose very name can only be understood literally, will never slip into such complacency. Joining a gang of revolutionaries who go off to protest the Berlin Olympics, she is shot and killed: a martyr to the unity of word and action.

Later, Rose says, she will "come to agree with Ninel about the useless delusions of literature." Her own experience of Europe derives from "beyond reality," filtered through "Pinocchio and Becky Sharp and Sidney Carton." Her beloved Collodi and Thackeray and Dickens offer little insight into the culture of the Mitwissers, that group of intellectuals in Germany between the wars who sought refuge in America. "All those others, the great foreign influx, the scholars, the refugees—they were only dwarves in this new place. Mann, Einstein, Arendt, yes, the grand explainers (I would one day pursue them myself), idols of the popular journals; but the rest were dwarves, rebuffed, humiliated, obscured, trampled on, *zwergenhaft*. Better to be a heretic! Better to be a Karaite!" What use are explanations, interpretations, embellishments, in a world where Anneliese's hand is broken when she, as a Jew, dares to speak out in class? Becky Sharp has nothing to say about the persecution of the Jews in Berlin in the 1930s, which forms a shadowy backdrop to the saga of the Mitwissers in the Bronx.

A NOVEL THAT PRESENTS ARGUments against its own reason for existence must always keep one foot out of the quicksand. We are offered an early hint that fiction may still have the potential to redeem itself. To quiet Elsa's mind and meanwhile to help her improve her English, Rose is instructed to read to her: "what was wanted for Mrs. Mitwisser ... was simply Story: a story about men and women free of history, except their own." She chooses *Sense and Sensibility*, suspecting that the cash-strapped Elsa, unlike Ninel, will be sympathetic to Austen's pragmatic views on the importance of money. At first Elsa seems to take no interest, but gradually she becomes more and more engrossed, until one day, when Rose is called away during a reading session, she returns to find the woman "half-sitting, sunk into her pillow.... The lamp was pulled nearer; she was very still. The light whitened the visible bones of her wrist and her narrow fingers. But her eyes were unsealed, sleepless, rapt. The small white fingers were gripping the book that smelled of cellar. Mrs. Mitwisser was reading, in a seizure of concentrated intelligence, an English novel."

Heir to the Glimmering World offers itself as an antidote to literature as parasitism, and its arguments are, for the most part, convincing. All the book's strands tug in some way at the knot of sources and interpretations, primariness and secondariness, that constitutes both its substance and its form. The play of fact and fiction extends to the acknowledgments page, where Ozick assures us that she has got her facts straight, referring the reader to two scholarly works on the Karaites as the novel's own sources. Thus we are invited to play along with the literary game, puzzling out where research ends and fiction begins. If the Karaites are a real sect, then is the focus of Mitwisser's investigations, a medieval scholar named Jacob al-Kirkisani, author of such works as *The Book of Gardens and Parks* and *The Book of Lights and Watchtowers*, also a historical figure? He was. Did he really write a tractate on the Bhagavad-Gita, linking the Karaites with Hinduism—Mitwisser's epiphanic discovery that ultimately dooms his own research? I have no idea; but if one believes in "rational proofs built upon the knowledge based on sense perception," as al-Kirkisani wrote and Mitwisser notes and Rose transcribes and Ozick reports, then perhaps it is the critical reader's obligation to find out.

Still, to preserve the allure of fiction, one must resist the temptation to delve too deeply. Suspending disbelief, after all, involves momentarily silencing the interpretive instrument and allowing literalism to take over. The novel's interplay between fact and fiction finds its most exhilarating instance in Elsa Mitwisser, who is slowly revealed to be the book's most interesting character. As Rose discovers, she was once an intellectual in her own right, a scientist with a fellowship at a prestigious Berlin institute, where she studied with Erwin Schrödinger. During the Christmas holiday in 1925, she and Schrödinger traveled to Switzerland together, where, one

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night, she bit into a boiled egg, and its shape sparked a revelation: "there it was, the explosion of *seeing*, the possibility that had until that instant eluded them, the idea that the object of their passion, like a wave of the sea, was after all not guaranteed to linger in one place, it was a force not a thing, their wild-hearted wandering fickle electron!" Yet ultimate origins are finally as difficult to pin down as the moving particle: the revelation became known as Schrödinger's equation, though "it was *she* who had bitten the egg"; and after the trip Elsa discovers that she is pregnant with a son who turns out not to resemble her husband.

The bitten egg can be seen as representing the crucible in which fact becomes fiction. We know that Schrödinger really existed, and that he was credited with an equation that describes the wavelike motions of particles; but the rest is itself as elusive as the fickle electron. Did he really have an assistant, who became his lover, who in a passionate night of discussion bit into a hard-boiled egg and was rewarded with a revelation? Or did the novelist, perhaps fixing herself a snack at a moment of respite from her own labors, see in "the crescent left by [the egg's] absent crown" not only the curve of the electron's wave, but also the completed whole that lingers in the mind's eye after a part has been taken away, like the imaginative vision that builds the bare bones of fact into a unified work of art? The origin of the story is finally unknowable. Here research ends and imagination begins.

THE DELIGHT OF OZICK'S intellectual puzzles cannot entirely compensate for the book's faults. She has always been a novelist of ideas, not of intimacy; with notable exceptions such as "The Shawl," her tiny and excruciating masterpiece, psychological realism is not the strong point of her work. In this novel it is almost entirely absent. A number of the characters are essentially caricatures, as bald-faced as their deliberately goofy names: Rose Meadows, an unsuitably poetic name for a character who is all prose; the overly apt Mitwisser, based on the German *wissen*, to know; and, most unfortunately, an Indian visitor ridiculously called Dr. Tandoori, who speaks in a parody of Indian-accented English. ("The condition of the roads, very bad, ice here, ice there! I confess I lost my way during several attempts to find it.") These incongruous monikers may be intended as a Dickensian echo, but the effect is lost when they are applied inconsistently. At the same time, the relationships even among those characters who seem intended to be three-dimensional are at times difficult to believe. Over what feels like a very short period, Mitwisser goes from a feared and unapproachable figure to a broken man sobbing in Rose's arms as she strokes his head and calls him by his first name. Rose herself does not progress as a character; by the end of the book, after her extraordinary experiences with the Mitwissers, she comes across as essentially unchanged, every bit as "prim and smug" as she was at the start.

It may be quibbling to insist on such matters in a novel as profoundly intelligent as this one, but they suggest a certain failing of imaginative vision, a preference for research over the fantasy that in the end must be the novel's driving force. In one scene, Rose follows Professor Mitwisser to the New York Public Library, where she looks up a travel guide to find a picture of a fancy Berlin hotel Mrs. Mitwisser has mentioned, hoping for a window onto the family's past. As she pulls it out from the shelf, wedged in between crumbling maps and phone books, the reader has a sudden, suspicious vision of the author herself in just such a library, searching for the right detail to lend an aura of authenticity to her project, perhaps taking down from a packed shelf a fragile old guidebook such as this one. Such hints, like the mini-syllabus that Ozick unnecessarily provides at the end of her novel, can have the effect of embarrassing the reader, who fears she might have caught the novelist naked. There is something uncanny about it, like a glimpse of the inner mechanism of an automaton.

In this novel, the mechanism has never been hidden; whatever veil once covered it has long since been torn away. This offers the reader a rigorous and enjoyable intellectual workout, but it leaves a lingering worry. Much of Ozick's previous work has found its inspiration in literary life, from "Envy; or, Yiddish in America," her now-classic short story about the politics of fame and translation, to *The Messiah of Stockholm*, in which she imagined a lost manuscript by Bruno Schulz come to life in a Swedish bookstore. Books about books, in the hands of a writer such as A. S. Byatt, have a tendency to be arid; one longs to tell the author to get out of the library and meet the real world. No one could ever call Cynthia Ozick arid. Her language alone, which propels itself with ease from the comic extravaganza of *The Puttermesser Papers* to the funereal nightmare of *The Shawl*, long ago earned her a position among the very first rank of American fiction writers. But it would be a genuine loss if her love of her own reading were to result in a stultification of her imagination, pinning it down just as a library contains and encloses its contents. "He had become his own archive," Rose says at one point of Professor Mitwisser, "a repository of centuries; a courier of alphabets and histories." But a novelist, if she is to be faithful to the glimmering world, must be more than an archive, and much more than a courier. ■

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CLEVELAND DIARIST

Swing State of Mind

WHEN I WAS GROWING up in Ohio, one of state's perennially lackluster marketing campaigns dubbed the place "the heart of it all." Now, it's true that Ohio is more geographically central than, say, California or New York. And, yes, it does have some legitimate claim to being part of that mythical region known as "the heartland." And, sure, Ohio is home to several popular attractions: the halls of fame (football and rock and roll) and Cedar Point, an amusement park boasting some of the world's tallest, fastest roller coasters. But "the heart of it all"? Who were they trying to kid? Throughout my childhood, Ohio remained the sort of place that people who lived in other parts of the country drove through, or flew over, on their way somewhere else.

ATTENDING COLLEGE ON THE EAST Coast, I found that many of my classmates—experts on the subtle class distinctions between Long Island towns and able to exchange knowing nods at the mention of certain New Jersey Turnpike exits—seemed only dimly aware of where Ohio was. "It borders Illinois, right?" Well, no. And there were frequent mix-ups about my hometown. "You're from Cincinnati right? No, wait, don't tell me. Columbus." Cleveland. I'm from Cleveland.

BUT THIS YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION has made "the heart of it all" seem like more than wishful thinking. Karl Rove has called Ohio the campaign's "ground zero." Numerous pundits have proclaimed that "Ohio is the new Florida," the place where the election will be decided. As a result, Ohioans are basking in an unusual amount of national attention. George W. Bush and Dick Cheney have spent 15 days in the state since May, John Kerry and John Edwards 21. Ohio holds three of the four TV markets with the highest volume of campaign advertising. Armies of canvassers have descended on the state to register hundreds of thousands of voters. And Cleveland's Case Western Reserve University was the site of Tuesday's vice-presidential debate.

THIS IS HEADY STUFF. OHIOANS HAVE always been proud of their place in national politics. The state claims eight presidents as native sons. And, for decades, with its mix of industry and agriculture, the state's demographics closely tracked the rest of the country's, making Ohio an important bellwether. It has sided with the winner in every presidential election since 1964, and no Republican has ever won the presidency without carrying Ohio, a fact that is not lost on Rove.

SO, SUDDENLY, IT'S COOL TO BE FROM Ohio—much to the wonderment of Ohioans and the bemusement of people elsewhere. People from solid red or blue states, their individual votes rendered meaningless by the electoral college, regard Ohioans with envy. And friends in Washington, D.C., and New York suddenly seem to know more about Ohio geography than I do, peppering me with questions about unemployed factory workers in Chillicothe and security moms in Cuyahoga Falls. And Ohioans get the pleasure of seeing the candidates pander to their parochial interests, such as when Kerry criticized Bush's decision to end steel tariffs in Austintown this week.

IN WASHINGTON, IT IS EASY TO THINK of the campaign as something distant, because it largely is. But, during a recent visit home to the leafy Cleveland suburb of Shaker Heights, I was surprised to see the battle for Ohio being waged on my very block. BUSH-CHENEY and KERRY-EDWARDS signs dueled in our neighbors' yards—still a jarring site in a suburb that prohibited lawn signs of any kind until 1995, after federal courts declared such bans unconstitutional. My parents reported they were under pressure to make a similar declaration of loyalty. Democratic fund-raisers called daily seeking contributions. And, every time I turned on the television, I was bombarded by the latest Bush and Kerry ads, none of which I had ever seen in Washington.

HERE IN NORTHEAST OHIO, WHICH IS the most reliably Democratic part of the state, there is an understandable fear that Ohio might once again back Bush, who carried it in 2000 by just 3.5 percent. For a time, Democrats thought Ohio would be easy pickings for Kerry. In 2000, the race narrowed dramatically in the 72 hours before the election, even though Al Gore had all but abandoned the state that fall. And, since Bush was elected, the state has lost more than 230,000 jobs. It had the worst job performance of any state except Michigan last year. But, despite this natural advantage, Kerry has struggled. Most polls show a slight Bush lead.

BEYOND THE SIMPLE FEAR THAT BUSH might win, conversations with family friends revealed another, deeper insecurity: that Ohio would somehow bungle its moment in the spotlight, that it would reveal itself not as a national bellwether but as economically and culturally backward. Clevelanders, who desperately hoped their city had finally shucked off its Rust Belt reputation during a brief urban renaissance in the '90s, are embarrassed that it has just been named the most impoverished big city in America. And there is outrage at Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell, a Republican who, for a time, insisted that no registration forms would be accepted unless they were printed on 80-pound paper stock, and who is trying to prohibit provisional ballots from being cast by voters who go to the wrong polling places. There are also rueful discussions of Ohio's ballot initiative number one, which would amend the state's constitution to prohibit not only gay marriages, but civil unions as well. The initiative has drawn criticism from gay rights proponents and the state's big-city mayors, who fear the loss of business. It will probably pass any way.

TELLINGLY, THERE ARE EVEN A FEW people who want the election to be over already so Ohio can be just Ohio again. Cleveland Mayor Jane Campbell last week joined other swing-state mayors in announcing that she plans to bill the Bush and Kerry campaigns $270,000 for security and other costs from nine campaign visits in the last six months. Campbell told *USA Today*, "This is a national election. The cost ought to be borne by the federal government, not city governments that have the misfortune of being in swing states." Misfortune? Most Ohioans wouldn't characterize it that way. We know you only love us for our electoral votes, but we're flattered to finally be at the heart of it all.

JEREMY KAHN

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What Elections Mean for Afghanistan

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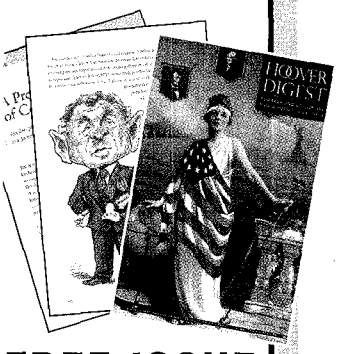

FREE ISSUE

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Afghanistan is holding its first ever presidential elections on October 9. This landmark event comes almost exactly three years after the United States and its allies launched a war to dislodge the Taliban and destroy al Qaeda. But **is this the birth of real democracy or a show election to satisfy the conscience and political needs of Western governments?**

By most measures, Afghanistan seems far from ripe for democracy. As President Karzai struggles to build a government in Kabul, much of the country remains under the control of warlord armies. More than 20,000 U.S.-led military forces continue to battle insurgents, and another 8,000 international soldiers are maintaining peace in the capital. Factional fighting has touched every corner of the country, and more soldiers and aid workers have been killed this year than in the previous two. The opium trade, which provides substantial resources to terrorists, was worth $2.3 billion last year and will increase an estimated 50 to 100 percent this year.

It will be difficult to ensure free and fair elections in this environment. More than ten million Afghans have registered to vote, many at great personal risk. This is a promising sign that Afghans want a say in their future. But the United Nations, which is helping organize the elections, recently released a report warning that many Afghans would be unable to freely exercise their political rights owing to warlord intimidation. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has refused to send election monitors, citing a lack of security. And on his first major campaign trip outside Kabul, President Karzai was nearly assassinated. Concerns about fairness are muted, however, because the outcome of the elections seems assured. There are eighteen candidates for the top spot, but there is little doubt that U.S.-backed President Karzai will win.

There is some value to holding elections, even if they will not be completely free and fair. If this election is successful, Karzai will win a clear victory, giving him a patina of legitimacy. This election will also serve as an important political and logistical test in preparation for parliamentary and local elections next spring. Those elections, which will be much more hotly contested, have the potential for far greater upheaval. However, many believe, rightly or wrongly, that the presidential elections have been rushed not to hasten democracy in Afghanistan but to precede the presidential elections in the United States.

Elections themselves are only a small part of democracy. Effective government service, protection of individual rights, accountability—these are the true fruits of democracy. Holding elections without the rule of law can undermine democracy by sparking violence, sowing cynicism, and allowing undemocratic forces to become entrenched. Slow progress on disarming militias and creating a national army and police force has left the central government with little power to enforce laws. The court system, controlled by fundamentalist Islamists in Kabul, is barely functioning in the provinces and cannot be relied on to enforce the most basic laws—let alone adjudicate politically sensitive issues such as electoral disputes.

Instead of focusing on elections—the end product of a successful democracy—we must do more to strengthen the institutions that will truly make elections meaningful. We have inspired millions of Afghans with the promise of democracy; we must now commit to turning that rhetoric into reality.

—J Alexander Thier

J Alexander Thier, a national fellow at the Hoover Institution and a fellow at the Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law at Stanford University, was a legal adviser to Afghanistan's Constitutional and Judicial Reform Commissions..

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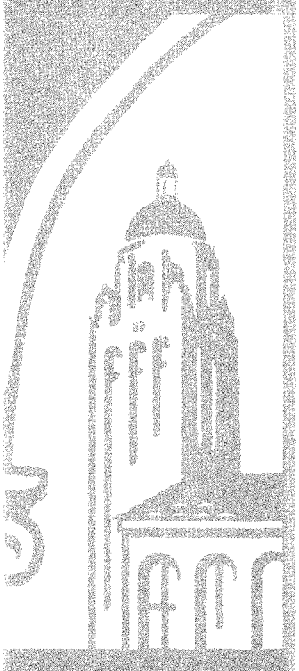

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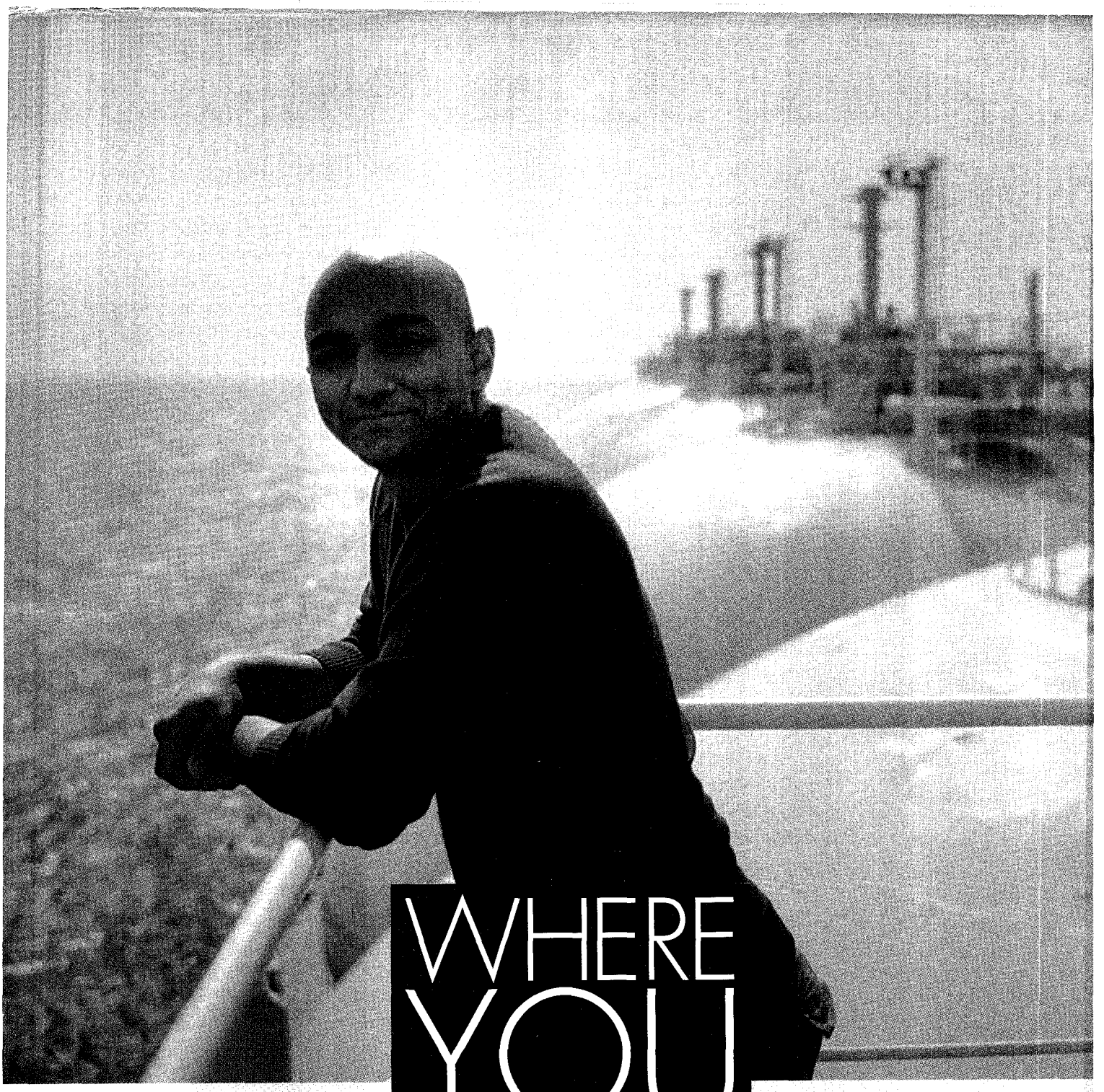

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